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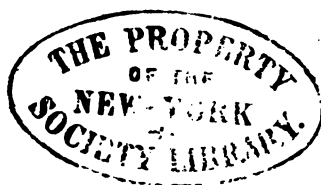
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HER PROVINCIAL COUSIN

A STORY OF BRITTANY

BY

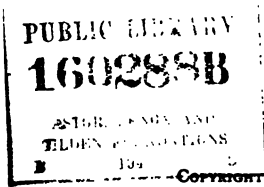
" EDITH ELMER WOOD "



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HER PROVINCIAL COUSIN.

A STORY OF BRITTANY.

PROLOGUE.

YOU would never have guessed that you were on a mountain-top. The plateau stretched away, flat as water, as far as the eye could reach toward the rising and the setting sun. North and south it did not seem to go so far. It ended abruptly. But nothing could be seen beyond. As a matter of fact there was a precipice to the south and a steep wooded slope to the north. But the world might have ended there for all one could see. The plateau was covered with a rank growth of blood-dipped grass. There were no trees, no shrubs, no flowers. Even the tough *ajonc* was afraid to show its prickly

...green silhouette against
The whole landscape had a
effect. It was a bit uncom
weird, witchy, like the border
the infernal regions. It
abomination of desolation
by Jeremy the prophet.

Perhaps that was what
peasant meant who stood by
attracted by my sketching!

"They are accursed of
muttered, half to himself at
me, shaking his head mourn
serious eyes wandering from
side, "accursed of God, these
erable wastes. They are open
to man or beast. When they
eat of this grass they die.
cursed—accursed!"

He harmonized with the landscape
very well, so much so that
serious thoughts of putting
the foreground of my picture

that faded, greenish, yellowish blue that delights the soul of the artist.

Turning my head suddenly, I caught sight of another human being only a few hundred yards away. The country was so deserted that I was surprised. The newcomer was a young man, with a well-knit, slender figure of remarkable suppleness and symmetry. He wore a navy blue jersey and *béret*, like the fishermen on the coast. He carried a gun in one hand and a game bag over his shoulder. He paid no attention to the old man and myself, but ran past, eagerly on the lookout for something invisible to us. He dodged behind every heap of rock or clump of grass to screen himself, and ran crouching—at times almost prone on the ground—with a wonderful catlike agility. Presently he dropped on one knee and brought his gun to his shoulder. There was a whir of wings, a quick report, and a bird fell at his feet. He came back with elastic triumph in his step, and as he passed us held up a plump golden plover.

"Not bad, was it, Father Boennec?" he called to the old peasant. "I killed his mate a good kilometer down the slope and followed him all this way. I couldn't bear to leave the poor fellow alone in the world!"

He showed a fine set of white teeth

the square lumbering Breton
ants, I had never seen a fig
a carriage like that.

“What a walk—what shou
what poise! It is superb!”
aloud. “There goes the very
I need. That man shall po
me!”

The old peasant looked at m
ngly.

“I think you will have to hu
her for your model,” he said.
s the son of the Château.”





I.

THE back seat of a *voiture couverte*, the public conveyance of the remoter Breton regions, was occupied by Mlle. Anna Sophie Françoise Delphine de la Planche with her maid and protector Augustine. They had left the through Paris and Brest train at Châteaulin at an unearthly hour of the morning and were feeling a lively curiosity as to how much farther they would have to go. Once or twice the stage stopped in some little *bourg* for a change of horses, and the landlady of the inn would lead out the fresh steeds herself and personally attend to the harnessing.

"*Mon Dieu*," said Augustine, with lofty pity, "to think of a woman doing such work!"

But Delphine, who had the breadth of her superior station and education, laughed tolerantly. It was all right if they liked it. Why not?

Augustine was a very trim and irre-

ways of the Parisian world,
portion of the planet bey
Gervais on the one side and
on the other was, so far as s
given over to lions and c
She wondered vaguely why
Lord had not rested from h
when he had finished Paris.
that would have been enoug
ideas of Brittany were dir
chiefly derived from certain r
continued from day to da
foot of the page in *Le Petit*.
There was only one point c
all accounts agreed. Whate
Brittany might be, it certa
not Paris. And if she had
lowing her mistress to the S
Islands, she could not have
she was giving a more touchi
of devotion than she was n
nishing.

Once, in the midst of a

the horses' heads, point a pistol at us, and his followers will jump out from the bushes and carry us off."

"Mademoiselle wishes to laugh," replied the maid, growing pale, notwithstanding. Such things were constantly happening in the *feuilleton* romances, and this world was such a brand-new world to her that she was prepared for anything. However it was only an honest son of the soil with a letter in his hand, which the driver took as he passed without checking his horses, and dropped into the tin letter box on the side of the carriage.

On and on they went, over hill and valley, the horses going up and down like rocking-chairs in a steady gait between a canter and a gallop. The seats of the carriage were very hard, and the curtains, which had lost all their loops and buttons, flapped frantically.

"For the love of Heaven, look there, mademoiselle!" cried the horrified maid. And Delphine, leaning forward to see, began to laugh. They were passing a peasant's cot of the usual style—granite, with long sloping thatched roof, two rooms evidently, a window in each and a door in the middle. They had economized on one window by not putting in any glass. A small girl sat in the

can have children. A cow is
ent. Cows cost money and c
don't. Hence it is prudent
them with more consideration

"Oh, well," said Delphine
"what odds? They are all
together."

The driver overheard the
and made some uncomplim
observations to himself in
Breton tongue, but thriftily re
to say nothing in French and
t up on the fares. It is of
limsy stuff that race enmitie
uilt.

The ladies might prepare
elves now, growled the drive
pproach to the Château de
iny was just around that
t the road. They were
rough a gorge. The hills
overed with an inhospitable g
ajonc now radiant with

country!" exclaimed Augustine, who was, as has been already intimated, a person of miscellaneous reading.

To the right, a fine avenue of beeches led slantwise up the hillside, and at the corner was a seedy looking dogcart containing a young man and an old. The old man was in peasant dress—faded blue, with a multitude of vests, yellow embroidered around the neck and decorated with rows of steel buttons and black velvet ribbon. The young man, who sprang from the wagon as the stage appeared in sight, wore a fisherman's jersey and *béret*.

"You are here at last, *ma cousine*!" he said, coming forward, *béret* in hand, to receive Delphine with the air of a *grand seigneur*. The contrast between his equipage and clothes on the one hand and his manner on the other was amusing. Delphine was distinctly amused. She knew that her Breton relatives lived in the wilds and were probably very provincial, but of such magnificent savagery as she saw embodied in this young man, she had never dreamed. She was surprised, too, at his well-defined black mustache and his self-possession. She knew he was about her age and, with her habit of looking down on the other sex, expected to

to help me to
carry the trunks from the
the dogcart. Delphine,
at being delivered from
and hard seats and qu
smells of the *voiture couve*.
a gold piece into the ha
driver that represented a
of surplus.

"Fool of a Frenchwoma
money like that," he mutt
dropped the coin greedily
purse and drove away with
ing her.

Just at this moment a
dust and a clattering of h
observed coming down the
beeches. A lad of twelve or
who was riding bareback
himself on to the ground an
up to Delphine, panting an

"They said I could not
meet you, *ma cousine*," he

say?" suggested the older brother, indulgently.

"What do I care? I wanted to meet my cousin."

"Why, Gaston—you *are* Gaston? this is delightful. I don't believe there is anyone else in the wide world who would run such risks to see me. And what a great boy you are, almost too old to kiss!" but she did it all the same. The boy flushed all over his face.

"Of course one embraces one's cousins," he said.

"And am I not also the cousin of mademoiselle?" queried Maurice ruefully.

"Oh, we of Paris have learned to shake hands like the English," laughed Delphine. Maurice was capable of being tormented, and Delphine's spirits rose accordingly.

"Anyone who disobeys father and mother for me has won my heart already. I foresee we shall be great friends, Gaston."

The old peasant shook his head disapprovingly, but the boys laughed.

"If it depends on me, we shall. You've no notion how lonely it is here, and how tired we get of each other," he explained naïvely.

"Which of the commandments would you like *me* to break for you? I am at your service," whispered the

up to the chateau, for the steep and the load heavy, and at least a couple of miles they left the foot-hills behind and came out on a ledge on the east side. The backbone of the mountain was still a hundred or so feet above them. The beeches had disappeared, and they were driving under an avenue of tall and melancholy cedars. The towers and chimneys of the chateau were seen above the treetops, but the air was close and drab. The road became a carriage-way. On either side was a pond of water with green scum. Out of the water rose the walls of the castle, a prison, with grated windows and no vestige of ornament. Over the gate was built on piers of solid masonry a two-storied wing of the Louis XIV. period, as ornate as the main building was grim. There was a granite gate, and a rusty



II.

MON DIEU, mademoiselle," sighed Augustine as she brushed Delphine's hair before she should go down to breakfast, "imagine how stiff I feel after sitting on mademoiselle's trunk all the way up the mountain with that toothless mummy at my side and the wagon going bump—bump all the time!" A pause—"Droll livery the coachmen about here wear, don't they, mademoiselle? For I suppose the old man who sat beside me was the coachman?"

Delphine was thinking, and did not answer.

"And, mademoiselle, I could hardly believe my ears when M. de Quellan addressed you as '*ma cousine*.' Never did I think to behold with these eyes a cousin of mademoiselle with two patches in the seat of his trousers!"

Delphine woke up.

"Augustine," she said severely, "middle-class people have to dress

pinning the coils of burnish
It was Delphine's only
beauty, this ruddy gold hair
made a glory for her piqua
face. It was silky and mass
the short hairs about her t
and neck curled softly witho
abetment of tongs. Perh
eyes were a positive bea
They were very large and v
able. Sometimes, when you
at them, you felt as if you w
ing into infinite depths. Th
knew Delphine best wondere
occasional fleeting St. Ther
pression was a mere effect
lashes and large pupils or
it really meant something.
questions are often hard
cide.

"Does mademoiselle expect
it very gay here?"

"Can?" with a . . .

"Mademoiselle expects to enjoy herself without gayety?"

"I expect to be bored to death."

"And mademoiselle came, because——?" insinuatingly.

"Because I wished to be a source of happiness to my cousins, of course," with some impatience.

"Most amiable of mademoiselle!" very blandly.

"Oh, I came because—because my father was determined for me to go somewhere. I saw I should have to yield that point, and this seemed to be the place that pleased him the least."

"Ah, I see."

Another pause.

"M. Saintaine will be very lonely while mademoiselle remains away from Paris."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"I imagine he will try to console himself."

"Ah, they all do that!" with a sigh. "But M. Saintaine is sincerely attached to mademoiselle."

"Eh? How much did he give you last time he called, Augustine?"

"Oh, mademoiselle! Surely you do not suppose——"

"Don't be absurd! And don't talk Ernest Saintaine to me either till we get home again. I am away for a vacation."

It is all but impossible to
them."

"Oh, they're easy to
understand," returned

"The Breton accent is just
English accent. They talk like
clever Americans who have been in
Paris a long while and
know French as well as we do. Their
phrases drop at the end
were tired. And they have no
sense of music or cadence
all."

"All?" repeated the man
fully. "They are untutored."

With which final dictum
tropolism, the summons to
came, and Delphine went
the presence of her elder
M. and Mme. de Quella
viny.





III.

THE breakfast was commonplace enough. The usual comments on the not-greatly-to-be-wondered-at changes that had taken place in Delphine since she was four years old—the date of her last and only other appearance at Kerviny—inquiries into the health of her father, and her fairly amusing account of her adventures in traveling on from Paris absorbed the conversational energies of the family.

M. de Quellan was a gentleman of the old school and something of an anachronism. He wore at all hours of the day a very shiny frock coat buttoned up to his chin. He had prayers for the king every morning, and mass celebrated in the chapel on the 29th of September. His manners were exceedingly courtly, and Delphine, observing this, considered the *grand-seigneur* bearing of her cousin accounted for, though not his unkemptness. Maurice came to the

ignominiously sent to his room in spite of Delphine's intercession.

Mme. de Quellan was a stout woman with snapping black eyes, vibrating side-curls, who looked on life rather tolerantly and made trenchant little remarks on many things which struck her husband as unduly bold.

The meal was satisfactorily concluded with a *pousse-café* of Champagne brought out by Maurice in honor of Delphine's arrival, the unfortunate Gaston was allowed to reappear, but was a trifle depressed till he saw that his cousin, unlike the young world of his previous acquaintance, looked at parental discipline in the light of a joke. His spirits rose accordingly to their usual ebullience, and he carried off Delphine to make the tour of the stable, the kennels, and menagerie. Maurice went along as a matter of course, but Delphine chose to consider him

tool sheds formed the long sides. In the center, the space was largely devoted to a vegetable garden. Some traces of a former landscape garden, said to have been laid out by Le Nôtre, were still distinguishable, but it was not kept up, and it is a question whether the result was not rather a gain than a loss.

"We'll look at the horses first," said Gaston. "They aren't handsome, but they're so good and strong, and I love every one of them—wouldn't change them for the greatest Arabs going!"

They were not handsome. Gaston was right. They were a motley assembly of pot-bellied farm hacks with thick ankles and shaggy fetlocks.

"You feed your horses too much hay," said Delphine oracularly. "You are spoiling their figures. They need more oats and corn."

"You are right," cried Maurice, with quick appreciation. "I will tell Father Boennec at once. We need our fair cousin from Paris to give us ideas in this rusty place."

Father Boennec grumbled his disapproval. What business had this chit of a girl from the city to be giving him advice about his horses? It was well at his time of life to introduce new-fangled foreign notions.

peacock from Paris? Did he
his honest Breton horses to
if they wore corsets? And
the diet of the animals continu
same in spite of Maurice's i
tions.

Through the gardens an
houses, Delphine would hav
hopelessly bored except fo
cousins' enthusiasm. Vegetab
vines had no interest for her
crude state, but the pride with
the boys pointed out the red
tomatoes and the yellowing
and the delicate pink lining
mushrooms was refreshing
flowers, what there were of the
the vegetables grew promis
together. Maurice, picking
most difficult of access, clim
a trellis that bent under h
swung himself along by a ra
from the garden.

my sake?" he said with an odd mixture of timidity and boldness.

"I will wear it for its own sake, *mon cousin*," she answered saucily, tucking it into her girdle. "That ought to content you."

"But it does not," he persisted.

"Cultivate the spirit of humility."

"I don't want the spirit of humility."

"You want the earth."

"No, not the earth—you."

Verily this boy was amusing with his man-of-the-world talk.

"It is all one," she returned with shrug.

"They are equally hard to get, you mean?"

"Perhaps—and equally hard to keep after you get them," she added, with a touch of cynicism that was wasted on her audience.

They were standing close together. Maurice spoke in that significant undertone that makes the most trifling remark confidential. Gaston stood at a little distance watching them with fine boyish scorn.

"Come, it seems to me I'm left out in the cold," he broke in with some show of reason.

"Children should be seen and not heard," said Maurice severely.

"My dear Gaston," cried Delphine effusively, "A thousand thousand

know"—with a toss of his
direction of Maurice.
hand affectionately on
shoulder, and he boldly
around her waist, cast a
phant glance at his brother
marking maliciously :

"You'd be willing to
not heard if you could
I am !"

And Maurice said he

The shed opposite
was occupied by a collection
Four or five were filled
of different varieties.
dears ?" cried Gaston
cage and putting some
furry things on his shoulders
nestled against his chest
stroked them vigorously
they the sweetest little
ever saw ? And see
know their mother," he
put them back one by one
showed their truly sweet

cant motion with his finger across the throat of a big rabbit he was holding by the ears.

"Heartless wretches!" Delphine exclaimed, laughing at this sudden transition from the sentimental to the practical. But she did not seem to feel the fate of the rabbits very keenly, and Maurice, who had his preconceived theories of what feminine susceptibilities ought to be, was disappointed.

Guinea pigs followed, and *cochons d'Inde*, with queer white whiskers, and a peacock, and ten canaries, and four paroquets, and a pair of pheasants—the cock a magnificent fellow with topknot and sweeping yard-long tail of red and yellow. Then there was a pair of turtle doves and a tame hawk and a young fox.

"You don't eat all these?" asked Delphine, when she had duly admired the collection.

"No, they're a useless lot. They're a fad of Gaston's," said Maurice.

"Eat them indeed—my precious treasures!" cried the boy. "I would kill anybody that touched them! Rabbits are made to eat, but these are to sing and be pretty."

"The distinction is subtle," said Delphine. "I am glad that I am one of the kind that sings and is pretty."

The carpenter's shop and the

Have a turn at the swing?
gested Gaston buoyantly.

Surely there was no reason
being dignified with these children.
Yes, why not? And gathering
black skirts close about her (she
still in mourning for her mother
crossing her daintily booted feet
told them to go ahead and swing
high, just as high as they could
was exhilarating. She was surprised
to find that she still retained a taste
for these simple pleasures.

"Higher, higher yet!" she
gayly. How amused her Parisian
friends would be if they could see
her at this moment—and the thought
added piquancy to her enjoyment.
M. Saintaine above all, her chief
but cynical admirer. He would
appreciate the neatness of her appearance
though, which was probably lost to
her cousins.

"No, you must stay with us," cried Gaston, giving a violent push to the swing and jumping aside with an infantile desire to tease.

"Shall I stop you? Will you permit me?" said Maurice quickly.

"Please—yes."

He caught the ropes, one in each hand, and hanging with his whole weight, after a moment of irregular oscillation, brought the swing to a standstill. . . . How close he was! She was almost in his arms. His eyes were burning, blazing into hers, his lips were parted, his breath was coming and going in short, quick snatches. Seriously, the boy frightened her with the primitive, savage intensity of his eyes. She flushed to the tips of her little ears and ran away quickly, with a hasty "*Merci, mon cousin,*" without looking at him.

"Poor boy," she reflected presently, "I suppose he never saw a woman before. It's not I that disturb him, but the eternal feminine within me. He needs cold-water treatment, though, and he shall have it."

Delphine was a young person of her word.

IV.



DELPHINE lay in bed
ing a naughty novel.
window was open wide
the fresh air of a sur
morning full of life
sweetness came dai
in, blowing back the curls from
forehead. Presently a pebble
through the window and droppe
the floor at her feet, then another
another. She flung down the
with a gesture of disgust. It wa
of tune with her surroundings
how. Holding her dainty dres
gown with one hand, she made
way to the window. Seated
placently in the grape-vine a few
below her was Gaston, just prepa
to throw another pebble.

"Good-morning, Romeo. To
do I owe this romantic summer

"Larks? Looking-glasses? Where's the connection? Never mind, I will go with you. This air is enough to make one young again." Gaston laughed.

"All right. Hurry up. We have a little shot-gun that's light as light, and it doesn't kick a bit, and I'll carry it for you, and you shall shoot the little larks—vain, silly little larks that come to look at themselves in the glass!"

"Ah, I begin to see. Poor little larks to die for that! How glad I am there is nobody to shoot me for the like!"

Meantime Gaston was climbing down the vine hand over hand.

"Hurry up," he called again from the ground. "I'll be cleaning the gun while you dress."

Very fresh and summery was the young woman who stepped out into the courtyard half an hour later. The white batiste, with a fine black sprig in it, was mourning of course, but of a not too depressing kind. The same was true of the black Gainsborough straw, with its daring bunch of white chrysanthemums.

"Mademoiselle is as charming as a fresh-cut flower," said Maurice, lifting his *béret* with his grandest air.

"Isn't this a darling little shot-gun

guns? Of course you can
to shoot?"

"No, we can't except when you
us use your gun. We haven't
but one permit, you see. If we
another gun along, they would
it and fine us. It would be no
have another permit, but they
so much!"

Great heavens, the sordidness
economizing on a thing like
The expense was probably
than an opera box for a
night. Delphine shivered.
narrowness of provincial life
perpetual source of astonishment
her. She had learned that the
tables and poultry consumed
family came off the premises.
Maurice hunted late and early
bring in game, that the cost of
ice was almost nothing, and she
surprised her venerated cousin

with some of the ancestral gorgeousness of silver plate, buhl tables, and unappreciated Poussins instead of scrimping so on the merest trifles?

"I feel like a murderer," said Delphine, when she had shaken off these reflections, "and the worst of it is I'm afraid I shan't be a successful one. I never hit a bird in my life."

"You will this time. It is so easy. It is as though they sat on the end of your gun and asked to be shot. Poor gay little larks!"

Maurice carried the gun and game bag, and Gaston brought up the rear with mysterious paraphernalia of string and stake and gleaming glass.

"We are going down the hillside to find an open field to begin our wicked work in," Maurice explained.

It was Sunday morning. They met a stream of peasants on their way back from mass in the little chapel of Notre Dame de la Souffrance in Kerviny. They were smart with bright ribbons and yellow broideries. There was quarreling and chaffing and love making and bargain driving going on, as there is sure to be in any crowd of men and women. They looked offishly at Delphine with scarcely concealed dislike, but greeted the boys with a hearty

weren't we born among them?
Haven't we always lived among them?
Aren't they our people?"

"The simplicity of the religion
is very touching, quite beautiful,
but a bit impossible."

"You are pleased to have returned
Maurice, somewhat surprised,
"but I don't see anything
touching, picturesque, impossible,
amusing in the situation. The
people have been good to me since
I was a baby. I have always been
welcome in their homes. They
would die for me cheerfully, and
of them, because it has been their
habit, because it is in their nature.
They don't need to be protected
by any of us. They are not
refined, but they live clean,
useful lives. They have the
that goes with all that, and a
young man may be sure."

nomenally large feet and brains as slow as a Dutchman's."

"Oh, you would love them if you knew them," cried Gaston confidently. Maurice said nothing, but looked wistfully after the little party-colored troop plodding up the hillside. He felt a conscience pang, as though he had been guilty of some disloyalty. After all they were his people. It was they who had known and loved him, and he had forgotten them for a moment for a gay little will o' the wisp who played with him as she would with a poodle.

"Maurice, *mon ami*," said Delphine, touching his sleeve lightly with her fingers, "come to my rescue. See how that horrid shoe string has got untied!"

At the touch of her hand and the sound of her voice he was at her feet again—literally and figuratively.

"*Dame!* Did anyone ever see such a tiny foot?" he exclaimed. "Why it's only fit for a baby!"

Was it possible that she could have done it on purpose? that she could have condescended to put herself into competition with them? to call attention to the contrast between her dainty feet incased in low shoes with patent leather tips and Louis XV. heels and poor Berc'hed Boennec's broad bare feet in their clattering

little victims are here before
There was not a cloud in
only a deep radiant blue, no
to be seen on it. But our
blueiness straight overhead a
exultation was wafted toward
caroling, thrilling, as when the
ing stars sang together.

"No," said Delphine, pausing
a moment with upturned face
"decidedly I cannot shoot
that sings like that. I'm
home."

"Come, think how vain and
they are, and how good they are
on toast," suggested the
Gaston.

"And what fun it is to raise
gun—so—and take aim—shoot
every nerve atingle and to
little trigger and see a bird
plump without a flutter?"

"It is their destiny," said

ry. The little songsters will be safe. I can't hurt them."

Maurice took off his coat, which he wore outside his never-failing jersey because the morning was fresh, and spread it on a gentle slope for Delphine to sit on.

"This is very ladylike sport," he said. "You sit down comfortably and your game comes to you. Nothing could be better."

Perhaps a hundred feet away, Maurice drove a stake in the ground and slipped on it a piece of wood about a foot long set with tiny mirrors at every conceivable angle. This contrivance turned on the stake as on a pivot, and a string was attached to it in such a way as to keep it spinning round and round.

"Will you hold the other end of the string, Delphine?" said Maurice, putting it in her hand. "Just draw it backward and forward, so, with a swift, steady motion." And he closed his hand over hers to show her.

"Now it is you who are luring the dear little birds to their fate, wicked, cruel Delphine!" laughed Gaston.

As the machine spun round and round, the sun's rays were reflected in the glasses and made the toy a dazzling blaze of light.

song coming nearer and
it stopped altogether, and
silence the little brown
ever closer to their door.

"Take the string, Gas
Delphine can shoot. He
all loaded. Hold it so
one lights on the grou
little below to allow fo
Ah, you have missed hi
phine, totally unused
touched the trigger bef
fairly taken aim and fir
one side, while the little
spread its wings and fle
harmful.

"I told you they woul
far as I was concerned
phine lightly, but she
vexed. She liked to suc
ever she tried, and all h
and hostility were rouse
fluffy songster she had

measured it all, snapped the trigger—a flash—a report—the bird never rose from the ground, but fell over where he had lit.

“Bravo!” cried both boys at once.

“He never knew what hurt him,” said Maurice.

“Maurice himself couldn’t have done it better,” added his loyal junior.

Delphine felt a thrill of triumph. She was not sorry for the bird—not a particle—not till they brought it to her and she saw the lids closing over the glazed eyes and felt the little heart still beating and fluttering in the warm body.

“It’s still alive. Throw it down on that stone *hard*, Delphine, to kill it”

“I can’t,” she said, with a shudder.

“That’s odd. But you don’t want it to suffer. Give it to me. I’ll do it. You don’t mind pulling the trigger, but you can’t finish your work. That’s just like a girl!”

“Do you think I’ll be talked to like that? I would knock its head on the stone if it were my own father!”

Twice she raised her hand with the bird in it, and twice paused irresolute. The boys laughed immoderately. The third time she summoned

quaint of any kind.

"You've got some blood on your dress," began Maurice, with coldness.

"Oh, what does it matter?" he answered recklessly.

"If it were only Prussians we were shooting!" sighed Gaston.

The flame leaped to their eyes at the words.

"I could shoot a Prussian as easily as you shot that bird, and plunge my knife in his flesh and turn it round and round and wash my hands in his blood—and laugh!" cried Maurice fiercely.

Delphine, who had known many nice Germans and was cosmopolitan in her sympathies, scarcely felt so blood-thirsty. A glance at the passion-swept face of her cousin set her French throbbing for all that.

"Oh, for the chance!" she

Altogether he was the most frank, primitive, simply organized being with whom Delphine had ever come in contact.

They went on filling up the game-bag. Sometimes Delphine would insist on her cousins' taking a turn at the gun, but for the most part they made her keep it. It was her expedition, they said. Once or twice Maurice, beside himself with excitement, took the gun from her hands quite unceremoniously.

"See, there are two in line. I can make a double shot. It would be a sin to miss it." And he would throw himself flat on the ground, crawl along on his stomach till he had both birds in line, then—bang—and two more trophies would be added to the game-bag.

Behind them, sitting in a row on the ridge of a small knoll, like so many crows, was an interested audience of peasant boys of all sizes. When, as sometimes happened, a bird would be wounded without being killed, Maurice would call to them—"Follow that bird, some of you, he will fall in a minute"—and half a dozen of them would start off crying, "Ja, ja, Maurice, we will get it for you!"—and come back ten minutes later, out of breath with running half a mile, to put the captured bird in his

too stupid ? they too





V.

THE return was not as pleasant as the start. Returns seldom are. The sun was up higher, and it was hotter, and the hunters were tired and moreover they were going up-hill instead of down.

"Aren't we almost there?" sighed Delphine.

"Are you tired?"

"Tired and thirsty too."

"Alas, we are only halfway."

"But we might stop at Father Boennec's," suggested Gaston.

"True, just the thing! You shall see a Breton peasant interior. It is curious—decidedly."

Delphine had no very deep interest in Breton peasant interiors, but she was glad of a chance to sit down and drink a glass of native cider, a beverage which, much as she despised it, she was forced to take in place of *vin ordinaire* even at the château.

The interior of the cottage was

... Built into
were two *lits clos* of massiv
oak, each holding three
berths shut up behind grea
doors.

"Think of sleeping in thos
with the doors shut up tight
Maurice.

Delphine shrugged her sh

"What are the doors for any
she asked.

"To shut the bad spirits
expect," suggested Gaston.
Father Boennec never goes to
without putting a cup of mi
the threshold to keep awa
fairies."

"Because if the fairies st
come in, they will upset the cu
they have to pick up every gra
spill, and the grains are so sm
there are so many of them
takes till dawn, and then of
the fairies."

was being laughed at, and the consciousness was not pleasant. Presently she came out with a great round leathery thing in one hand, which she laid on the bare table in front of Delphine, and placed a cup of butter and a knife beside it.

"And what may this be?" the young lady asked, with lofty disdain.

"Mother Boennec wants you to taste one of her buckwheat cakes," the boys explained. "You must try it or you will hurt her feelings. It is the national dish of our peasants, you know."

Delphine made a small grimace. Certainly it was not appetizing. The pancake, since such it was, was about fifteen inches in diameter and half an inch thick, made of unbolted buckwheat mixed with water.

"And how do you do it?" she groaned.

"Spread it with butter, cut it in slices, roll them up and eat them—so. You don't need a fork." And Gaston suited the action to the word.

Delphine tried to follow his example, but one bite was enough.

"It is fortunate I am not a Breton peasant," she observed, laughing.

"Mademoiselle does not like my *galettes*?" said her hostess, with some chagrin, "and yet they are considered good."

noticed him. He must be under forty, but the slouching way in which he sat on the bench inside the fireplace gave him the look of an old man. His eyes were weak and watery, his face was absolutely expressionless. His hands twitched nervously all the time, and he kept smoothing down his ragged clothes with a pathetic care.

"Who are you, pretty girl? Do you belong to this country? Don't you like her *galettes*?"

"Mademoiselle must excuse me," said Mother Boennec. "I am so innocent."

Then as he kept up his questions, she went over to him and put her arms round him by the shoulders.

"Keep still, poor fool," she said, not unkindly. "Hast thou any questions?" And the man drew his head on his breast and said nothing, though he kept his watery

don't notice. He isn't any relation of theirs. He was wandering about begging, and they took him in. He has been here for years."

"Wouldn't you think they would need what little they have for themselves?" marveled Delphine, looking about the wretched little cabin.

"There is none so poor but someone else is poorer, mademoiselle," said Mother Boennec, coming up just then. "The good God gives the privilege of charity to us all."

On the opposite side of the fireplace from the innocent sat Berc'hed, one of the daughters. She had taken no part in serving Delphine, and she watched her with no very friendly eyes. She was heavy and square in feature and figure, her hands were large and red, and so was her face. It was not wonderful that she did not like Delphine. Her eyes lighted up pleasantly when they fell on the boys, except when Maurice was bending over Delphine or looking at her in that devouring way he had. Then her eyes blazed darkly and the corners of her mouth hardened. Whether Delphine noticed the girl or not, it would be impossible to say.

It seemed suddenly to grow dark in the hut, and instinctively everyone turned to see what had shut out the sunlight. There in the doorway

stick.

"Peace be unto this h
said, in the Breton langua

"And to you also!" t
swered, rising. Berc'hed
ward and, taking off the h
led the old woman to th
the fireside, while Mothe
set out before her cider
wheat cakes, which she
eagerly.

Delphine's eyes looked
ing.

"She is a wandering
Maurice whispered. "T
way they receive beggars i
offer them what the hou
I never knew one to
away."

"What beautiful simpli
phine returned, without
deep appreciation of its be
When the old beggar

"Tell us the news about the pretty lady," echoed the innocent.

"I have come from the Callac country, my friends, and a weary way it is for an old woman like me. The news? Let me see. Do you know the miller's daughter at Trégarrec? She is betrothed to a lad of Carhaix, a blacksmith, they say, and a fine lad. They will be married at the next Saint Jean."

"Do you hear that, Berc'hed?" said her mother. "That girl is younger than you. We'll have to be finding you a husband."

The girl flushed and looked at her mother angrily.

"I don't want a husband," she said.

The beggar leaned over and laid her clawlike fingers on the girl's arm.

"You mean you don't want a *blacksmith* husband," she whispered significantly, fastening her sharp eyes on her.

The girl started, paled, shivered, and was silent.

"And what else, good mother?"

"They tell me a man was found murdered in the woods the other day near Saint Esprit. His skull had been crushed in with a club, a good old-fashioned *pen-bas* very likely. He was a stranger, they don't know who

though, with no time to
peace with God."

"Ay, it is that."

"Anything more, good

"They say the woman
the tavern at Bourg-Goët
than she should be, and
it's so, for the men hang
like flies about a honey
many a good wife's life she
with her wicked arts. T
have heard."

There was a sigh of m
faction and disappointment
little circle of listeners.

Maurice, and Gaston stil
themselves on the backless
the table.

"Tell us the news about t
lady," droned the innocent.

"The news about the prett
repeated the hag, fastening
maliciously.

not bring you good luck,—the pretty lady—

“ Two of you she will slay.
One of you she will maim—
She has no love for the Cornuotes ! ”

The old woman had dropped into meter and was intoning her prophecy like the wandering bard she was. She lifted one hand to give emphasis and solemnity to what she said. It had the most marked effect on her audience. They all looked frightened and crossed themselves, casting fugitive glances toward Delphine compounded of fear, distrust, and dislike. Maurice, who had been listening with one ear all along to the talk by the fireplace, sprang up excitedly.

“ How dare you say such things ? ” he cried in Breton. “ They are lies. You know it. I won’t stand it ! ”

The old woman laughed mirthlessly.

“ Two she shall slay,
One she shall maim—
She has no love for the Cornuotes ! ”

she chanted. The two women and the innocent shivered and drew away a bit farther from Delphine. Maurice strode toward the old crone, his eyes blazing, his face flushed, his arm lifted as though he would strike her.

Mother Boennec, too
seizing Maurice's arm

"Hush, hush," she
said to Maurice. Remember
the 'guests of God!'

"You call me with
the hag. "Ah, my p
shall be one of the s
fear! I could punish
me a witch if I liked, l
under the spell of the
eyes that you could n
self. Go thy way, go
remember

"Two she shall slay,
One she shall maim—
She has no love for the

And thou art a Cornu
member, my pretty!"

"Come," said Maurice
Delphine, "let's get ou

"What is the mean
anyhow?" she asked
they left the house

Is that all? You aren't really
d of me?"

Scarcely," returned Maurice, with
warm light leaping to his eyes.
t you see it impresses them—the
e family. They believe every
It will make you unpopular."

With the Boennecs? And pray,
difference does that make?"
None at all, I suppose," but
ice sighed as though it did.



VI.



As they round the road, the pretty glimpses of trees and a running stream bridge, again of which a girl was down-cast eyes, one hand toying with the ribbon the other held fast and patted by a grotesque that hardly looked like to be a man.

"Bah," exclaimed I was the first to spy the she stand it? Such a dwarf he is, and she pretty girl—as girls go.'

tailors are the match-makers in Brittany, you know."

"Why don't the lads do their own match-making? I shouldn't think they'd like to have another man holding their sweetheart's hand in that fashion."

"They wouldn't like to have another *man*. Tailors don't count. They're such ugly, misshapen creatures that nobody could be jealous of them."

"But all tailors aren't hunch-backed dwarfs."

"Oh, yes, they are."

"And why, pray?"

"Because if a man was fit for any other work, he would never choose to be a tailor. You've no idea how the peasants look down on them and despise them. They won't even speak of one without saying 'Saving your presence,' as though he were some unclean animal."

"Poor tailor!"

"It *is* hard lines on the tailor, for after all the girls' hands he holds, he never wins one for himself."

"Perhaps he gets the best of the bargain," suggested Delphine cynically, "and with none of the consequences."

By this time the absorbed couple had heard their approach, and Thumette, turning crimson, broke

say, Thumette, what
mean?"

"Who is it, Thumette,

The tailor waited on the
the hunting party to come
took off his hat with a flourish
a profound bow.

"*Bonjour, messieurs et mesdames*
said in labored French.

"Whom are you trying
Thumette for?" Maurice

The dwarf's eyes
shrewdly.

"I think I may consider
as settled," he replied, rubbing
hands together gleefully,
the girl was shyer than the
are. The happy lover is
Hir (the long)—you know
inn-keeper's son in Kervin.

"Surely—yes. He is a fine fellow.
I am glad of it."

"I have got him his liberty
shy as she is. Oh, I never
ever monsieur would like

will follow mademoiselle's advice
I do my love-making in person."
'Wise boy!' laughed Delphine,
I gave him an electric flash from
dark eyes, which might mean
thing—or nothing.



VII.



NE evenir
later, a lit
men asse
tavern of
brate the b
ar Hir. A
head of the deal tal
boned lad whose leng
his name, while his
themselves on the b
side. They all kept
broad-rimmed, low-cr
trimmed with two o
velvet ribbon caught
a silver buckle and
streamers. One amo
was, mixing with the
footing of apparent
wore a fisherman's je
—Maurice de Quellan

Over in one corner at a little round table with a white cloth on it, illuminated by a tallow candle significant of luxury, sat two French artists who had arrived that afternoon, lingering over their cognac and watching the scene before them with considerable interest in the deep shadows and the conflicting lights of fire, wick, and candle—which led them to discuss Raphael's treatment of the moon, torch, and angel's nimbus in his "St. Peter Released from Prison"—but none at all in the little human drama that was being enacted.

"Bring us a pitcher of cider, Mother Berou," cried Maurice, "and let it be a big one! We are going to drink to Alan's health."

Then followed a merry clinking of glasses and many a hearty "*D'ho iec'hed!*" (To your health!) And as the genial cider gradually relaxed their somber faces, someone proposed a song, and Ives, the carpenter's son, led off with :

MERLIN THE MAGICIAN.*

Merlin, Merlin, where are you going
With your black dog so early in the morning?

Iou! iou! ou! iou! iou! ou! iou! ou! iou! ou!
Iou! iou! ou! iou! ou!

* The original of this song and the following one are to be found in the "Chants

And then for the mistletoe from the c
That grows in the forest beside the s

Merlin, Merlin, be converted!
Leave the mistletoe on the oak,

Leave the water-cress in the prairie
And the grass of gold as well.

Leave the red egg of the sea-serpent
Covered with foam in the hollow of th

Merlin, Merlin, be converted,
There is no magician but God!

Iou! iou! ou! iou! iou! ou! iou! ou! i
Iou! iou! ou! iou! ou!

This was felt to be a little
and they were all glad when
struck up the rousing

SONG OF THE ERMINE.

The leaves are opening on the oak
Before the buds of the beech have bur
Here is the wolf watching the bull. .

John the Bull and Will the Wolf
Are mortal enemies, by my faith!
Willie is watching from the shore. . . .
Osa! skes! skes!
Osa! skes! skes!
Watching Johnnie swim across.

If you want the flesh of bullock,
This is not the day to have it :
But long horns shall you have and
pointed. . . .
Osa! skes! skes!
Osa! skes! skes!
To rip you open if you wish it.

Kate the sly one, Kate the Ermine,
Laughing, from her hole can watch them.
"Look you," Kate says, "with what
grace. . . .
Osa! skes! skes!
Osa! skes! skes!
This brave William cuts his capers!

"The poor fellow cuts his capers
On the point of cruel horns.
Yet methought your teeth were better. . . .
Osa! skes! skes!
Osa! skes! skes!
Teeth were better than his horns!"

Up goes Johnnie, down goes Johnnie.
"Courage, William! Chase him now!
You will catch him without trouble. . . .
Osa! skes! skes!
Osa! skes! skes!
He is tired and you are nimble."

"Oh, yes, I have worn him out.
I am going to teach him reason!"
"Ao! English John, look out ! . . .
Osa! skes! skes!
Osa! skes! skes!
"The devil of France is after you!"

Neither oats nor wheat shall grow

No tree shall blossom in the orchard
The flowers are frayed as the
storms. . .

Ah, I could wish with all my heart

Osa! skes! skes!

Osa! skes! skes!

Ah, I could wish with all my heart

That they would strangle each other

Merrily the glasses clinked
the chorus became ever more
fiercer. Probably the mermaid
it did not know the meaning of
song. Perhaps they had never
heard of the weary long war
succession of Brittany between
English-born John of Montfort
the French-born Charles
when the good Breton parted
apart and prayed only that
the foreigners might destroy each other
leave Brittany in peace-
without a duke. In the
centuries the meaning of these
songs and these words had

The priest with his theology,*
The doctor with his medicine,
Gladly would persuade me
That wine will do me harm !
I let them talk—
I go my way—
To the devil with the doctor !
I shall live until I die !

And if indeed I have to die,
(I shall try, though, not to do it)
My well-loved patron, Bacchus,
I pray thee have me buried
Beneath a hogshead,
My mouth half open,
So that when they turn the spigot,
I may get the drops that fall !

Call no priest when I am dying
To help my spirit on its journey,
But let my brother drunkards
Intone the Libera !
Let the clinking of glasses
Be heard in Bordeaux,
And the service for my soul's repose
Be sung in taverns far and near !

“ Another pitcher of cider, Mother
Berou, and bigger than the last ! ”

“ You lads had better go quietly
home and drink no more,” grumbled
the old woman.

“ No, no—just one more pitcher,”
insisted Maurice.

Loosened by the cider, their
tongues grew nimble, and jokes not

* The whole of this folk song is translated
into French by M. Souvestre in “ Les Der-
riers Bretons.”

impossible to think of her
was ! It would be a pi
And the longing came ov
get out in the open air,
stars, where he could thi
with a clear conscience.
them the best story he co
of—or rather the worst—
the last word, as they all
laughing, jumped to his feet
them a quick gesture of far

“Not going, Maurice?”

“Not yet?”

‘Why, it is still early!’

“We haven’t half finish
pitcher.”

“Nay, nay, Maurice,
thou shalt not leave us.”

“No, my friends, I have
the cider I can stand, and I
to go. Stay and finish the
and order another if you like
luck to you, Alan ! Good-
night.”



VIII.



NCE out of the village, he slackened his pace, lit a cigarette, and began the ascent toward the château. He took off his *béret* and carried it, the better to drink in at every pore the refreshing coolness of the evening. A suave, subtle perfume from the newly mown clover fields rose to his nostrils like an incense. A hush was over all the world.

Steeped in a delicious summer-night languor, he walked on up the mountain-side, wandering in fancy with Delphine and making her, in his youthful rashness, sweeter, tenderer and more yielding than ever the good Lord had made her . . . when he heard his name distinctly spoken. He was just about passing the Boennec cottage, and looking up, he saw Berc'hed standing by the road-side. The interruption was anything but pleasant. He had already got Delphine's ruddy head on his shoulder,

out here so late, Berc'hed ?' severely. " You ought to be

The girl's voice shook.

" I saw you go down to th and I waited for you to com

" And what did you want

" Nothing," with a chok and she turned to go.

" Oh, yes ; there must ha something," persisted Mauri ping her.

" Why are you so change rice ? " she cried, suddenly c ing him. " Why don't you your old friends any more ? remember how you and Gas to come for me every day to rying ? We used to be so ha

" Foolish child," he said, the summer-night tendernes voice that another woman ha out, " I am not changed. I

ing berries. And besides, I have so many other things to do now."

"Other things to do? You mean you have your beautiful Parisian cousin to amuse?"

"Perhaps thou art right, Berc'hed, but what is that to thee?"

"It is nothing to me, M. Maurice," said the girl coldly, and, turning abruptly, ran into the house to shut herself into the lower berth of a *lit clos* and burst into a passion of tears.

"Alas, she dislikes Delphine like all the rest, stupid peasants that they are!" murmured Maurice, and being very inexperienced and not especially conceited, he went his way, absorbed with youthful egotism in his own concerns, without ever dreaming how poor Berc'hed's heart was aching.





IN the seclude
Brittany whe
roads and t
hotels have n
trated, hospit
the primitive
spontaneity of the M
When Maurice mentio
breakfast table that two
tists had arrived in Ker
Quellan spoke up like a
of the good old days and
"It is not fitting that
leave strangers in tha
tavern. I will drive dow
them up to the château."

The artists required lit
sion. But when they ar
phine, who had hoped
furnish some distraction
be used to make Maurice
able, was conscious of a di
of disappointment. Fort
might know how to gain

anything else, even for the afore-mentioned lowly office. The brothers Dessaline, however, were happily unconscious of their shortcomings and chose to consider themselves, because they were Parisians, as Delphine's natural friends and consolers. They growled about Breton dirt and stupidity and were surprised to find so little sympathy in their fair fellow-townswoman. They even ventured on some jocose comments and innuendoes on their hosts' establishment, which they seemed to expect the family to be too simple or too stupid to understand; but these Delphine promptly and severely repressed.

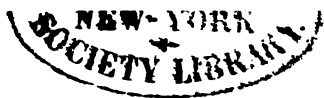
I have said "they," but I apologize. The elder M. Dessaline did it all. His brother was extremely taciturn, worked hard between meals, and made himself chiefly remarkable at table by a talent for molding animals out of bread. Without saying a word to anyone, without the shadow of a smile, he would work deftly away between the courses till his plate was encircled by running rabbits, pursuing dogs, curly tailed pigs, and long-eared donkeys, each no more than an inch high. Gaston found this very interesting and struggled vainly to do as much. Even Delphine encouraged the silent molder when she

some with a certain

The elder brot
dolent disposition,
his hands. He wa
five, inclining to s
red lips and a s
beard and soft wh
with rings. His v
sensuous, and rath
he evidently adm
cadences, for he tal

"Ah, this good c
ton cider—it is del
unctuously the first
holding his glass u
though it had been
deira. "It is very
finds it in its perfe
The art of making it
out, I am told. But
much better than
wines."

M. de Quellan b
ably. Mme. de Que
wardly that her g



Delphine enjoyed the artists' discomfiture hugely, and insisted on filling up her neighbor's glass with the despised liquid.

Maurice never said a word in the presence of the new guests. It was plain that he detested them heartily and that only the fact that he was in his own house kept him decently civil. The elder Dessaline tried at first in a condescending fashion, as from an older man and a Parisian to a younger and a provincial, to be very friendly with him, but Maurice was not to be won over.

"I am disposed to think, *mon ami*," said Mme. de Quellan very gently one day to her husband, "that the times are changing, and we had better change a little with them. And next time strangers alight at the tavern in Kerviny, it might be more charitable not to deprive the worthy *père* Berou of their patronage !"

"Leave travelers in that wretched place ? Never while there is a roof over my head !" he protested, but his wife felt confident that he would take her advice none the less, and wisely left him in apparent possession of the field. The women who insist on having the last word are not the women who rule the world.

The evenings, when they were all thrown together, were a severe strain

another little table and
as a pretense for t
madame's knitting ne
and she fell into one co
the other as it chance
evening after the ar
everyone sat about stiff
on subjects that were c
to anyone. The seco
they tried a game of *tre*
should include the w
The next evening Maur
Gaston went to bed, *M.*
not come in, Delphine
corner with a book, and
Mme. de Quellan was lei
of entertaining their gu
a time the elder brother
crossed the room to whe
was seated.

"Mademoiselle is read

"As you see." Ind
quite apparent.

"Is mademoiselle de
ested in her book?"

Delphine was none too gracious about it. M. Dessaline, however, was apparently not sensitive, and he drew up a chair and sat down.

"This is a great contrast to Paris."

"Assuredly."

"Mademoiselle nevertheless contrives to amuse herself?"

"Perfectly."

"You are doubtless enjoying the beauties of nature."

"Not particularly."

"These rugged hills and desolate rocks, these broad valleys and laughing streams—they do not give you pleasure?"

"Not in the least."

"Oh, you enjoy them without knowing it! I am sure of it. Mademoiselle is one whose soul cannot but respond to such things."

"If you know anything about my soul, monsieur, it is more than I do."

"One has only to look into mademoiselle's eyes to see her soul."

"Indeed? It must be very instructive. I will study my looking-glass with care."

"You could not spend your time better!"

"I believe you are right. I will begin right away. Thank you for the suggestion," she replied, rising. Her whole nature rebelled against

Quellan's evening k
to her own room.

There were oth
plenty of them, but
Dessaline persisted i
to Delphine.

"Ah, mademoisel
one day, following her
"what would you
drive in the Bois de
afternoon?"

"Nothing at all, n
had preferred stayin
dare say I should hav
I wanted to go back
I would do that. I ar
Breton summer immer

"Mademoiselle is r
in being able to adapt
cumstances. As for n
am homesick. Don't
thing—the shops? the
crowds?"

"One tires of all that

have been most kind to my brother and myself. They are of the salt of the earth. Mademoiselle cannot but find their society enlivening."

Delphine looked around quickly. Was he daring to jest? But his face was properly grave, and she turned back to the window.

"And M. Gaston is a nice lad, a manly boy. I cannot say as much for his elder brother."

"I have no wish to discuss my cousin!"—with an angry flash from her eyes.

"Nor I. It is not an interesting subject. It is strange, though, that people of birth and refinement like M. and Mme. de Quellan should have a son with such low tastes."

"Monsieur!" There was no mistaking the gleam this time. "How dare you use that word in connection with Maurice de Quellan."

"Mademoiselle, I care to know nothing more of the young man than my first introduction to him. The evening we arrived at Kerviny he spent in the tavern drinking and carousing with a crowd of vulgar peasants who called him by his first name and thee-and-thoued him as though he were one of them. If that sort of thing does not justify the epithet I used in the eyes of mademoiselle, I withdrew it."

the peasants he has known was a baby and played with call him by his first name would you have? As for that must be all right, for he said it at breakfast and said he was there. His parents told you that matter of course."

"They have given him a bad case, I fancy."

"Monsieur, remember that speaking of my cousin."

"M. de Quellan is for having such an advocate, mademoiselle. I am silent."

"Thank Heaven for that," she murmured under her

Yet in spite of herself, he had sown did its work found herself out of so Maurice, even disgusted. with a crowd of peasants

ate Maurice was proportionately wretched.

Being out of sorts with Maurice, she naturally did her best to make the feeling mutual. It was easy enough to disturb, shock, puzzle, grieve Maurice, but his loyalty was proof against a stronger sentiment. Once though, he left her, firmly resolved never to think of her again. She was sitting under an arbor reading. The sunshine filtered through the leaves and flecked her hair with bright patches of light. It was a very pretty picture, and Maurice, stumbling on it unawares, was thrown off his guard. She looked up and greeted him with such a sweet warm smile, doubly welcome after her chilling manner of late, that his fears melted away, and the words he had so often thought and so often repeated to himself leaped to his lips.

"Delphine, I love you!"

"Nonsense," she answered coolly, all the warmth gone in an instant.

"Delphine, listen to me——"

"Indeed I won't!"

"I am in earnest. I love you."

"You? You are not old enough to know what love means!"

One would have thought Delphine was his grandmother, she talked

in particular. One
just as well as another

"But, Delphine——

"Oh, I know what
Now I don't intend you
your apprenticeship with
man. Practice on a child
Why don't you make
of these healthy red-cheeked
girls you're so fond of
they answer every bit
might try Berc'hed
begin with."

Maurice's cheeks had
ing hotter and his fist
clinched throughout the
nary speech.

"What manner of
anyhow?" he said
strode away.

"If he thinks he can
mental slops to his
Paris and enjoy a little
flirtation' with her & if
he's mightily mistaken

a fine rage. Gradually his anger cooled.

"She is very hard to understand," he mused, "but she did not mean what she said. Otherwise she would not have said it."

This logic may have been weak, but it convinced him—and that is, after all, I suppose, the chief function of logic.



IT was through
 who had
 Edenlike
 the life a
 their sup
 rate work

Pardon at Guingam
 talked of. They spe
 sire to go to it to ma
 of costume, and M
 promptly offered t
 there, not without a
 it whispered in pas
 sight of the railroa
 them back to the F
 so constantly pinin
 Mme. de Quellan sa
 they not all go? I
 interesting spectacle
 It was only fifty mile
 were good and the
 The boys were both d

of the peasants as could be spared from the farming should follow in open wagons.

They made a prodigiously early start and shivered with the cold as they drove through the sparsely settled hill country till the sun got well up toward the zenith. Farm-houses were rare and villages rarer. The long brambly slopes were not fit for anything but pasturage, and the only people they met were mournful shepherds in goatskin coats. Once they heard a fresh boyish voice singing, "Hollaïka ! Hollaïka ! Hollaïka !"

"That is the way the shepherd lads call the shepherd girls across the valleys," whispered Maurice to Delphine.

"I wonder whether she will come ?" she returned, smiling.

They listened with strained ears, but there was no answering call, and the boy's song died out in discouragement.

"A very proper little shepherdess," said Delphine,

"A very cruel little shepherdess," sighed Maurice.

Farther on they passed a field where some men and women were working. They were droning, as they worked, the most plaintive air Delphine had ever heard.

who die are blessed ! .
daughter, when you choose
band, do not take a soldier's
life is his king's. Do not
sailor, for his life belongs
But above all, do not take
tills the soil, for his life is
to weariness and misfortune

"It is enough to give one
said Delphine wearily.
suppose their life is pleasant
why can't they be a little
ful about it ?"

"I don't see anything
them cheerful," said Ma
ously.

"That is because you,
Breton blood in your veins
French pride ourselves on
in the midst of misfortune

"We Bretons never take
from danger or difficulty.
see nothing in them to learn

noon. 'The streets of the quiet old town were bustling with unwonted life. Peasants from all over Brittany stared at each other's gala clothes with more or less disdain. Here assembled the Léonards in their somber blacks and the Cornuotes with their flaring knee-breeches and gay broideries. Women with high pointed *coiffes* like fool's caps looked askance at the many-colored *bigoudens* of the fishwives from the coast, and the mountain girls in their dainty little lace caps no bigger than a nursery maid's marveled at their lowland sisters, whose stiff-starched flaps curled a foot out beyond each ear. Most at home of all, and so, most calmly critical, were the well-to-do peasants of the fertile Guingamp country with their brown corduroys and light-colored cashmere shawls.

The market-place, all around the great bronze fountain, was filled with booths, and a brisk traffic was going on in sweetmeats, knickknacks, and "objects of piety." Farther along in the square, an itinerant dentist was pulling teeth and distributing salves. Nearby, a tent was spread where crowds thronged to see the great American sea-serpent and the Mongolian educated pig. Farther still a little stage had been put up and decked with boughs and gar-

stood watching the dance on, Delphine," whispered "one turn, just for fun." Quellan looked shocked at the thought of members of the assembly disporting themselves in place, but madame told them to go ahead and enjoy themselves. They whirled among the constant dancers. The music was so peculiar and the time so peculiar that they persevered for some time. They came back flushed and out of breath.

"Will mademoiselle give me the honor of a turn?" said Dessaline, closing his eyes.

Delphine was about to refuse, but on the ground of fashion she happened to glance at her reflection and the look of protest on his face caused her to

the boy should presume to dictate with whom she was to dance and with whom not to dance !

While the more worldly of the pilgrims were dancing in the square or bargaining among the booths, the devouter ones were praying in the dimly lighted church before the golden shrine that contains the miracle-working statue of Notre Dame de Bon Secours, the patroness of the Pardon. Here and there a penitent was making the threefold tour of the church on his knees. The steps of the sanctuary were thronged by beggars hideous with all sorts of disease and deformity, clamoring loudly for alms.

It is a strange old church, built at many periods by many architects, with no two windows and no two pillars alike. It has not been spoiled by whitewashers and restorers, and its dark, time-stained walls have an air of impressive dignity not to be accounted for by mere size. The chapel that contains Notre Dame de Bon Secours, unlike the rest of the church, is a trifle tawdry. There is a great deal of gilt and modernness about it. But the worshipers redeem it. Those prostrate forms are so gloriously in earnest. Before the altar twinkles a whole firmament of candles. Every pilgrim has lighted

could: To give thanks
ulous recovery? To of
for some secret sin th
away at the conscience
the love of a sweethe
death of a rival? To
safe return of a sailor h
the perilous Iceland fis
only to dance or get dru
wares at twice their valu
a rendezvous with the r
For all these things and
the pilgrims throng to th
Pardon. Here, crowd
with their various motiv
sions, slow pulses beat
gish blood moves more
life seems concentrated:

Tired out with the p
the noise and the multitu
they had seen, our par
wilderness were glad
thread their way to the n

"As charming bits of color and grouping as heart could wish," murmured the elder artist.

"A fine chance for thieves to steal and silly girls to come to harm," philosophized madame.

"Anyhow it's lots and lots of fun!" cried Gaston.

"All places are alike to me, and any place is heaven where you are," whispered Maurice in an aside to Delphine—and Delphine laughed and said nothing.

She was very busy thinking, though, on another subject. Her fertile brain was occupied with what she was pleased to consider a scheme of benevolence. She had determined on no less of an undertaking than getting rid of the artists! Her motives, she told herself, were quite altruistic. Of course the artists bored her to death, but then, as she reflected, they were also a dreadful strain on M. and Mme. de Quellan. She was sure that that worthy couple grew pale and thin daily under the ordeal. And they made life a burden to Maurice—poor dear Maurice! And it was such an unmixed imposition. They were perfect leeches. And manifestly M. and Mme. de Quellan were quite too innocent and unworldly to know how to protect themselves from such people. Un-

stances should force he
and devious ways, the
justify the means. She
several methods in her r
she finally hit on one. T
the railroad had apparer
effect on the artists, and
from bitter experience tha
proof against hints and
The scheme she decided
was a bold, not to say
stratagem ; but Delphine
her good wits and her
and, be it added, her goo
carry her through. She be
tions at the dinner table,
turned, a shade more grac
was her wont, to the elder
and asked if he had had t
tunity of making the s
needed.

“Of course we have t

There are such charming bits of old streets and bulging houses and crumbling city walls."

"It *is* a pity. Can't you persuade your cousins to stay over a few days?"

"I'm afraid not," Delphine laughed. "They would do a great deal for me, but I don't think anything short of sudden death could keep them away from home twenty-four hours longer. They have the *mal du pays* already. No, you will have to give up the charming bits this time."

He bowed his resignation, and Delphine deftly changed the subject. Several times during the course of the evening, though, she managed to throw in some allusion to the attractions of the Guingamp country for searchers after the picturesque, being always careful to make a little impression without overdoing it. At last M. Dessaline gave her just the aid she wanted by remarking that his guidebook had an interesting description of a curious Renaissance chapel at Notre Dame de Grâces a couple of miles away, and from what was said of the architectural features he thought it was just what he needed for a composition he had on hand.

"Too bad you can't visit it," said Delphine politely, but with the air of

astir. To her great
found the artists do
selves.

"What a glorious
breezily, ringing for
"I wish we didn't
yet," she added with

"So do I," chimed
artist, falling into the
been set for him.

"Yes," she went
ally, "it is such a pity
those studies you want
after a moment's
lighted up with the
idea. "But by the way
you can't? What is
chapel? Notre Dame
Perhaps it may be over
and we could stop here
you to make your sketch

"Oh, it would take
the artist sighed. "I
tax M. de Quellan's
But there was a note

be possible to pass it by making a trifling detour.

"Bravo!" cried Delphine. "You shall stop there, I promise you, and the rest of us will pass the time as best we may."

"Oh, I couldn't think of it!" he protested rather feebly.

"Well," said the ever-ready Delphine, with another flash of inspiration, "if you don't like to do that, I have a better way. Why don't you and your brother walk down there now and begin your work? My cousins are not even up yet, and there is always delay about starting so large a party. We shall probably not get off for several hours, and your work will be nearly finished by the time we come along."

"An excellent idea!" exclaimed the taciturn and industrious younger brother in so hearty a tone that the perfidious Delphine's conscience pricked her a bit. "Come, let us get right off."

"I suppose our baggage can come along in the carriage?" mused the elder brother with a prudent eye to the conveniences.

"Oh, certainly," said Delphine.

"If we were quite sure that this arrangement would not incommode M. de Quellan?"

"I'll go upstairs and find out."

came back presently with the assurance that it was all arranged. The artistic brothers accordingly went off. Delphine watched them go, a fine comely sight and made a fine comely retreat. He was to tell the hotel of the room of these gentlemen, be retained and their baggage in it, as they were coming in the evening. Then, when she appeared, she said unblushingly to M. de Quellan :

"I was to deliver the thanks of the Messieurs Dessaline, and their thanks for your assistance. It is a source of real regret to me not to see you in person, but for you it is not their fault. It is their fault that they received intelligence that they were obliged to leave so suddenly before you came down."

"Ah indeed," said the man, with a bland smile.

crossed his mind that Delphine had had something to do with the sudden departure of the artists, he stifled the thought as unworthy of himself, more especially as his relief at being rid of his inconvenient guests was most heartfelt, and he was not anxious for any explanations that might lead to their return.

When Delphine told the story of her duplicity to Maurice some time afterward, he looked dumfounded with horror for the first minute, then burst out laughing.

"But I always thought you liked those artists," he objected in a puzzled voice, and he wondered why Delphine found the remark so very amusing.



XI.

IN following
or misfort
ists, we ha
from the
don, a cha
tive effort
no means spare the
We accordingly pray
back some sixteen or
to the time immedi
ing the dinner at
France.

By half-past seven
place was a seething n
ity again. Our part
balcony of the notar
transacted M. de Que
extensive business and

and was carried out into a side street. On the steps of the church stood a priest distributing colored lanterns to those who were to take part in the procession. At the corners of the square were great piles of faggots ready for lighting, and in the center a pole crowned with a garland of roses and a banner bearing the rather crude inscription, "*Vive Marie !*"

At last the great procession was ready to start. Slowly it filed around the square, then began its circuit of the town—first a band of priests with lighted tapers, then the serried ranks of peasants from every district of Brittany forming the main body of the procession, a company of girls in white robes with starlike candles, privileged pilgrims from Lower Brittany in white surplices carrying the gold bust of Pius V., who conferred the plenary indulgence on this pilgrimage, then the sacred relics guarded on each side by a file of soldiers with drawn swords gleaming in the torchlight, and last of all the Mayor and other civic officials, followed by a multitude of priests and acolytes.

There is a hush over the thousands that watch while the thousands that move chant in unison after the Leader of the Pilgrims :

There is no place in th
place consecrated to
So thronged by pilgrim
Madame Marie de
Guingamp—
Madame Marie, who is
star of the firmament

She gives light to those th
She gives hearing to the d
lame to walk ;
Through her the sick an
dumb speak ;
To everyone who is afflicted
Draw near, on-lookers of a
Behold the instant of the y
don opens.
Now or never are there
sinners.

Whoso confesses and receive
during this solemnity
Will gain five hundred day
besides happiness for a r
And the pleasure of enjoyi
penance.

Inhabitants of Guingamp a
near by,
May you lack nothing ! Ha
that rejoices in Marie !
Vou

May they have pity on my soul !—I am about to finish.

May we all be permitted to meet together again one day in the Valley of Josaphat!*

The slow-moving procession, with its thousands of earnest pilgrims and its thousands of swaying lights, was an hour in passing, and the last of the Kloäreks or theological students had barely left one side of the square when the head of the line reappeared at the other side. Solemnly they made their way to the several bonfires, which the officiating priest kindled. Then the scarlet-legged soldiers drew up in double file making an avenue to the church door, and under their drawn swords the holy relics were returned to their shrine to rest in peace for another year.

The procession disbanded. The day of religion was over. The musicians reappeared on the embowered platform and the dance began again, the taverns and wine shops opened, the fun waxed madder and wilder. The Breton peasant, like all self-contained, stolid natures, slow to kindle, leaps over all bounds when once the fire is ignited.

* I am indebted for the text of this canticle to M. Souvestre, who quotes it in full in "*Les Derniers Bretons*."

shed their blood, and
their heads. All the
people retired early to
bolted their doors wide
and went to bed. In
the entrance to the city
had been put up for the
protection of the pilgrims, and
and children were herded
in them with woefully little
protection. In the morning
—without the artists—
the town the way the
roads were cumbered with
peasants, whose heavy
sorrowful faces plainly told
sins had been committed
another Pardon. But
the laborers were still in the
field and still singing the
refrain :

My brothers, it is not good
My brothers, life is sad,
And those who die are blessed.



XII.

THE Louis XIV. wing of the Château de Kerviny had been built over the pond in humble imitation of Chenonceaux by a frivolous progenitor who went to court and tried to ape the French nobility. He squandered a lot of money and cut a very poor figure in Parisian *salons*, where he was known as "that Breton barbarian" and made the subject of *mots* innumerable. His son went to the devil under the regency, completed the financial wreck of the family, and died young of delirium tremens, leaving his widow and infant son to go back to the ancestral wilds and live on nothing a year. Like its illustrious prototype, the afore-mentioned wing contained two stories, each consisting of a long, narrow gallery with windows on both sides. The lower one had descended to menial purposes. The upper one was just as the worldly-minded forbear had left

— F —
In a big armchair
Delphine sat, absorbed
in a volume of
poems, in a volume
which was nothing in the
world to her so insufferably
what would you have
in the book seemed
so much, as he sat
looking out of the window
at the only human nature
Delphine-nature—to

“How can you
he grumbled.
enthusiasm for an
Racine was adding
It may be good for
children to learn
“Athalie” by heart
grown young women
sort of thing to
it was incomprehensible

“How can I?
ing. You haven’t
at all!”

“That is all!”

and make her wish for him, but he lacked the courage to be politic and proceeded to do the most foolish thing in the world.

"Delphine," he said, in an injured tone, "don't you think you're treating me pretty badly?"

"Treating you pretty badly?" she replied, looking up for a moment from her book. "I didn't know I was treating you at all."

"That's just it."

"Well? I don't see. Oh, you mean that I ought to be amusing you this afternoon? I don't know why. If it doesn't amuse you to look at me, you can go away. You can read or go shooting or drink cider with your peasant friends at the tavern."

"I don't want to do any of those things."

"And if you chose to stay moping around here all day, it's not my fault."

"Oh, it isn't, isn't it?" muttered Maurice, but Delphine took no notice of the observation.

"And now please let me go on with my book, and don't interrupt me any more."

There was silence for at least two minutes. Delphine turned over a page. Truth to tell, she had no idea what was on it. She read line after line without its meaning anything to her, but she knew it was time to turn

Delphine," he said.
"Well?" With the
her attention from the
with the greatest diffi-

"Don't go home!"
"Oh, I have to," with
fulness.

Maurice looked de-
"I suppose your face
you back very, very
natural enough. He
without you. If I were
let you out of my sight

"Papa? You don't
He could never stand
were not for these very
really hard lines on a
a grown daughter. It
strait. Do you suppose
go backward and forward
the solemn house where
his establishment in the
artistes? Why, it grates
sensibilities. It requires
mental readjustment

Lorette? Why not? I can't help knowing about her. The last one was in the Latin Quarter, and the one before——"

"You speak like that of your own father?"

"Why not, if it's true? Oh, he's no worse than anybody else. They're all alike."

Maurice turned on his heel and left the room. Delphine looked after him with a smile half of regret, half of amusement.

"So I shocked you, *mon cousin*?" she said the next time she saw him.

"You pained me, *ma cousine*: I can't understand you," he returned quietly.

For an instant Delphine was ashamed of herself, she scarcely knew why, but she wished herself back in an impossible Arcadian state of innocence. The next moment the wish was gone, and she was as well satisfied with herself as usual.



XIII.

THE twilight was
in the Boenne
The good-wife v
ing just outside
and reviling Sair
whose special fi
was to look after that sort
because he didn't make t
come faster. There is a
division of labor among th
celestial hierarchy. Whil
Herbot presides over churni
Ives looks out for baking
that the bread rises properl
saint cures fevers, another
a specialty of the gout.
lawyers, fishermen, sailors,
their particular patron. Sa
nély devotes himself to the
of horned cattle. There w
difficulty, I believe, in fi
patron for man.

petitions for ribbons and sweethearts that God took pity on him and made him instead the patron of dogs! So runs the legend. I am not responsible for its lack of gallantry.

The girls were away at vespers. The children sat on a stone bench inside the fireplace, and every few minutes the eldest boy threw a handful of pine-needles on the hearth. For an instant there would be a crackling, a blaze, a ruddy after-glow, lighting up the children's faces, then the somber little interior would fall back into grayness. Gaston lay stretched out on the floor in front of the hearth, his chin buried in the fur of a shaggy Newfoundland and his arms about the dog's neck. Father Boennec sat on a three-legged stool near by, his head bowed, his clasped hands hanging between his knees, apparently in profound meditation.

"You haven't told me how your cousin Pierre got his arms broken, Father Boennec," Gaston said at last, raising his face from its canine pillow and settling himself into a comfortably expectant attitude.

"Oh, so I didn't. Well, as I was saying, Per was a good-natured lad, but a trifle given to drink. He was walking home one night, not drunk, you know, but he had taken a little

spring washing away
cloth. It was no tin
flesh and blood to
their clothes, and
chill creeping through
row of his bones.
were washing, too, he
look, more like a sh
thing else. The woman
a crazy song about
till the Judgment Day
and no hope, and I don't
all. Per started to turn
back the way he came,
notion of passing them
spied him and called to
first one, then another,
then all three together
that he found himself
them whether he would
never could say no to a
how. He had no spirit
three women came to me
ing out the dripping sh
it and wring it out for

themselves ; but his guardian angel knew full well that if he refused, the witch-women would throw the shroud over his head and strangle him, and as he was in liquor, he would go straight to the bad place. So the good angel counseled him to do as they wished. As he took the thing in his hands, he felt the blood in his veins turn to ice-water and his heart to a lump of ice. His hair rose up on end and the teeth chattered in his mouth. His guardian angel was bending over him, to whisper in his ear which way to wring the shroud, so that he could get away safely. But the Virgin Mary said that Per had drunk too much and had missed-mass for three Sundays and ought to be punished, so the angel was silent, and Per twisted the cloth the wrong way. Instantly the three women gave a hellish laugh that would make you die of fright. They snatched up the shroud and seized his two arms and twisted them around and broke them both and disappeared. And Per was found next day lying by the road-side as I have told you, with both arms broken and frightened nearly out of the few wits he had."

"How do you know that's true?" demanded Gaston. "How do you know he didn't roll down the hill

“How do we know
returned Father Boenne
from his stool and pa
down the well-trodden f
things happen all the ti
never seen the Night-w
it is true, but I have see
guides—I myself, with
eyes.”

“Tell me about it,” p
stretching himself lux
pleasant anticipation of t

“Well, they had sent
come to my sister’s husb
Ledanec farm. He was l
point of death, and I f
waited till morning, I shc
late. My road led over
and it was a clear star
with the least little rim of
moon left over, so there w
ger of losing my way.
keep up my spirits by wh
there was very little heart

long strides. He was taller and walked faster than anybody I had ever seen. He was very dark and had a long beard way down on his breast and he carried a wallet and a strong *pen-bas*, one of the Breton clubs that were used in the old days. You rarely see one now. I had a notion what he might be, but as he came up with me, I said pleasantly, 'Good-evening to you, friend.' He answered no word, but walked straight on without looking. I called out again, 'Good-evening, my friend.' But he did not seem to hear me at all. Then I mustered up all my courage, slipped my feet out of my *sabots*, made the sign of the cross and cried, 'In the name of the Holy Trinity, who are you?' There was a flash of light, as though a horse's hoof had struck on a stone. I looked again and the Soul-guide had vanished."

"Were you frightened?"

"No, my boy, not I. I knew the holy Virgin and all the saints would protect me."

"And who is the Soul-guide, Father Boennec?"

"He is an evil spirit who is always on hand when anyone is about to die, and if the guardian angel of the dying man happens to be away, he snatches the soul when it leaves the

the marshes, who v
and stop travelers
prayers and masses
lease them ! You ca
night you pass that
least is no secret.
was on his way to
suppose ; but luckily
flight."

" How was it you
appear, Father Boenn

" Well, that is the
part of it, my boy. Y
many things at once.
tell whether it was
sabots, or making the
speaking to him for
that frightened him
are all said to be g
spirits."

" How long ago wa
Boennec ? "

" Forty years, at leas

" Have you ever se
since ? "

"Eh? I don't like to speak of that—but as long as it's you, M. Gaston—— I saw the Death-candles dancing along the road night before last. They bode no good. They bode no good."

"Death-candles? How do you know they weren't fire-flies?"

"M. Gaston, you are but a lad. Do you think you know more than all your elders? It bodes no good, I tell you."

"If Saint Herbot won't make this butter come, he shall have no candle from me on his feast day!" exclaimed the old woman at the door.

"Don't threaten the saints. They are more powerful than we," said her husband.

"It works well, though, sometimes," his spouse continued cheerfully. "Do you remember when Marie Calvez' child had that fever? They had been praying to St. Roch for days and weeks, and St. Roch was so busy gathering flowers in Paradise that he paid no heed to them. So they took the blacksmith with his forge into the chapel, and he heated the iron red-hot and swore to shoe St. Roch's statue as he would a horse unless the boy was cured. And then St. Roch woke up in a hurry, I can tell you, and took away the fever and the boy got well. Ah,

“Don’t meddle
the old man re-
head. “They are
It bodes no good
his practical wife
Gaston shook his
his dog, and started





XIV.

IT'S almost as good as a scene at the theater," said Delphine patronizingly, the fact being that no painted stage trappings ever had or ever could stir her imagination and thrill her pulses like the scene before her—only she did not see fit to say so.

"Almost as good as a scene at the theater!" Maurice burst out indignantly, and then sighed. "Yes, I suppose it's natural you should look at it that way," he added, vainly trying to adjust himself to her point of view. "But it means something more to us Bretons."

It was the feast of M. Saint Jean, a balmy summer night. Over them and around them were the mysterious dark depths of the sky. On every hill-top, north and south and east and west, blazed a bonfire, the more distant ones melting together and lighting up the horizon with a dull red glow. Over the valleys came the sound of the

buzzing that see
the heart of ea
Quellan carefully
phine that it was
ing the fingers a
to the rim of a c
on a tripod ; but
ciatively wished h
in so much bette
of the night while
counted for. In
of each bonfire w
of cattle waiting f
led over the embe
fire died down so
longer blazed, the
begin bringing up
driving the poor,
animals across tl
When there was d
going out altogeth
was stopped, faggo
and the slower he
for another time.
so sure to bring go

Within the ring of brighter light was an animated crowd of peasants: the younger ones joined hands and danced in a circle around the fire, the older ones sat outside. There were always some seats left vacant, though, that no one dared to take. No tired mother or palsy-stricken old man would have thought of approaching one. There they stood empty and useless all the night through.

"Can you guess what they are for?" whispered Maurice, bending close to Delphine's ear—"Ghosts! Yes, really and truly I mean it. The souls of the dead come back on Saint John's Eve, and if there were no seats left for them they might think they weren't wanted, and that would make the poor ghosts feel sad."

"Ugh!" exclaimed the girl, with a little shudder.

"It must be dreadful to be dead," Maurice went on, "because you really aren't wanted anywhere, you know, no matter how polite people are about leaving chairs and things for you. Supposing a man came back after he was dead to see—somebody he loved very much, and slipped his ghostly arm around her waist and was just going to touch his lips to her cheek, when she fell down in an epileptic fit. Think how he would feel!"

On, I beg y
Maurice quickly
and moved five
really didn't mean

"And for Hèz
come back to see
you die! It's all t
She paused.

"To stand me
he suggested.

"Yes, only I fel
tation in saying sc

"Oh, don't minc
in a dejected tone.

Just then a long
a greasy jacket,
through the crow
Delphine. She di
stinctive Phariseei
illogically venting l
on the nearest obje
reasonable rage a
clinched his fists
from striking the r
savagely in Breton

Bretons are not used to foreign ladies."

For a moment Maurice felt a pang of remorse, as he had felt that Sunday when they went lark-shooting, only keener, as all his feelings were keener nowadays. The man was a forester who had pulled him out of the river years ago and had taught him to shoot and to fish and had been good to him all his life, while Delphine——? How softly the hair waved away from the back of her neck, how delicate and shell-like her ear was as the red firelight filtered through it, how perfect the curve of her cheek with the shadow of long lashes barely seen around the edge of it. The crowd closed in around them, the wind blew her dress against him, every nerve in his body was tingling, every pulse trembling, and all the peasants in Brittany were as nothing!

Watching them with greedy eyes, though herself unseen, as she kept purposely among the long shadows of the hedges, was a sturdy peasant girl. Not a gesture, not a tone, not a fleeting expression of Maurice escaped her. Her clumsy red hands hung limply by her side, the *sabots* clattered on her bare feet, her square body and heavy features looked in-

... and ...
said it was time to
started the young p
peasant watcher wait
passed out of sight, t
sigh, that was almost
to the nearest bonfi
she secured a still s
then made her way ac
to the next fire, then t
the next and the next,
was far spent. She sp
and no one molested he
there they nudged ea
whispered, "Poor Berc
worse every day ! She
charm of the Nine F
made her perfectly daft.
notice one of us. It's
girl to look too high
Berc'hed !" So poo
secret was no secret
the Bretons have a spe
culiar tenderness for ho
and it was pure symp
touch of ridi-

All unconscious of the interest she was exciting, the girl went patiently on, trudging from fire to fire.

"Only one more," she murmured as she reached the summit of a steep little knoll after a wearisome climb.

"Don't do it, child!" said a voice close beside her, and a bony hand was laid on her arm. She turned; startled and angry, and saw the old beggar-woman who had prophesied about *her* that day in the cottage.

"I don't know what you mean," said the girl sullenly.

"You know very well what I mean, child. You have heard the old people say that the girl who gathers coals from nine bonfires on Saint John's Eve shall surely marry within the year."

Berc'ed flushed a painful crimson and shook off the old woman's hand, but did not try to deny it.

"You have reached the eighth fire. Do not finish the spell! *Let the eighth be the last!*"

The impressiveness with which the words were spoken, and the authority commonly given to utterances of the sort, did not fail to work on the superstitious mind of the peasant girl; but her purpose was still strong within her, and she resented interference.

"Why shouldn't I go any farther?" she asked defiantly.

someone else ? ”

“ It couldn't,”
more weakly. She
the suggestion.

“ And do you re
him anyway ? ”

“ *Do* I ? ” she m

“ If you do, you
him.”

“ I ?—not love
peated, dazed.

“ Not really. I:
you would want I
Do you think it
happy to marry you
you are fit to be his
be ashamed to intro
friends. He would
it would be you whc

“ Don't—don't—
girl, shrinking toget
down at the old wo
she crouched, shi
“ I am not so wicke
no, no. I don't wa

ask for much—indeed, indeed I don't !”

“ Now we are growing reasonable. Get up, child, and I will see what I can do for you.”

The beggar took a crust of bread from her wallet and began dropping the crumbs one by one into a spring that bubbled beside the road, watching them sink and muttering all the while to herself in an unintelligible jargon. Suddenly she seized Berc'hed's hand and drew her nearer the firelight, looked sharply at her palm for a moment and bent over, whispering close to her ear that the bystanders might not overhear, “ This day month I see you in the arms of the Son of the Château ! ”


The girl gave a glad cry, unfastened the brooch at her throat, the only trinket she owned, and thrust it into the fortune-teller's hand.

“ Now go home,” said the old woman, “ and leave bonfires and love-charms alone.”

And as she watched the girl's retreating figure, a ghoulisn sort of merriment spread over her face.

“ Poor fool ! ” she laughed aloud. “ Poor little fool ! ”

XV.

ADDLE the
right off, I
nec!" cried
ning into th
young whir
finished my
I'm going to have a go

But Father Boennec
answer. He sat on
bushel basket, his head
eyes fixed on the floor.

"Father Boennec!"
again, but he did no
frightened, the boy cam
his hand on the old man

"Eh—Gaston—it is
said, looking up with a
of terror in his eyes whi
as he recognized his
thought he had come fo

"Thought *who* had
you?"

anything so uncanny, but there was something in the peasant's face that checked him.

"If it wasn't this time, it will be soon. I have seen it, Gaston, not an hour ago."

"Seen what?"

"The Death-boat with the Little Yellow Dwarf in the stern—down by the river—just now. It is coming for me——"

"Father Boennec, you *mustn't!*" protested the boy. "You know there aren't any such things—really! It was the butcher's white boat and a boy in it with a yellow oilskin coat on."

The explanation sounded far-fetched even to Gaston, and Father Boennec paid no attention to it. He kept closing and unclosing his hands, and the muscles of his face twitched hideously. Great drops of cold sweat gathered on his forehead.

"I am not afraid to die. I am a good Christian. I have lived my time. I am ready to go."

"If he is ready to die, he has an odd way of showing it," Gaston could not help reflecting. If his experience had been wider, he would have known that Father Boennec was by no means alone in that respect. Presently his sympathy got the better of his analysis.

... ..

But the old man
"Then go to
is wiser than I.

He repeated
times before the
grasp it. Then

"Ay, Gaston,
will go to the
tered off.

Before night even
knew that Father
the Death-boat
Dwarf, and the
him with awe as
the rest, on whom
already rested.

self had grown qu
confessed and b
taken the commu
candle before the
eph, who gives an
death," to his dev
preparations he w
as if nothing had



XVI.



S the days went by and the Yellow Dwarf did not make his appearance to carry off Father Boennec, the impression of impending evil weakened with everyone except himself, and the preparations for his daughter's wedding went on apace. The suitor and his relations officially visited the home of his *pennerès*, and the Boennec cottage put on its gala aspect for the occasion. All the cupboard beds were waxed and rubbed. All the copper pots and pans were shining in the dresser like so many mirrors. It may be as well to confess just here that some of the finest ones had been borrowed from a neighbor's to lend an air of opulence to the scene, but that was an understood and allowable stratagem, and no one was really deceived. The proper amount of health-drinking and hand-striking was gone through with, the marriage contract was signed, and the day for the cere-

...ceded over the scene
benediction. It was
fashioned wedding with
and observances of
days.

When the groom, a
gayly bedecked, reached
the Boennec cottage, the
fast shut. They put their
against it and tried to
entrance, but the bride
on the inside were to
them, and they fell back.
Next they tried straight
little hunchback tailor
still acting as the groom.
advanced to the door and

"In the name of
Almighty, of the Son and
Ghost, peace be unto thee
joy greater than mine!"
a loud voice.

And the bride's

shoemaker, replied from the inside :

"What is the matter, my friend, that your heart is not joyful?"

To which the wily tailor made answer, "I had a little dove in the dovecot with my pigeon, and along came a hawk like a gust of wind and frightened my little dove away, and I don't know what has become of her."

"You are pretty well fixed up for a man so afflicted. You have brushed your blond locks as if you were going to a dance."

"Jest not, my friend. Have you not seen my little white dove? I shall never be happy again in the world till I have found my little dove."

"I have not seen your little dove, nor your white pigeon either."

"Young man, that is not true. The people outside saw her fly along your court and alight in your orchard."

"I have not seen your little dove, nor your white pigeon either."

"My white pigeon will be found dead if his mate does not come back. He will surely die, my poor pigeon! I am coming inside to look."

Here the nimble little tailor tried to push past the bride's defender, but the ready bard was too quick for him.

... through

"I have been
garden, my friend
found your doves
quantities of
eglantine and, but
little rose bloom
of the bush. I
if you like, to cheer

He dived into
more, and returned
hand a chubby, round
a girl beaming with
of her position.
the child's cheek
to kiss her. Then
back from the ugly
a boisterous laugh
the bridal party.
though, to disconcert
he went on as
happened. "A
truly! Sweet and
the heart! If my
drop of dew, he mi

This time the bride's defender returned leading Mother Boennec.

"I went up to the loft and I did not find any dove. I only found this ear of corn left over from the harvest. Put it in your hat, if you like, to console yourself."

The tailor lifted the matron's hand gallantly to his lips.

"As many grains as has this ear of corn, so many little ones shall my white dove have under her wings—in her nest—she in the midst of them!"

But the tailor was still unsatisfied.

"I am going to look in the field," he said.

"Stop, my friend, you must not go. You might soil your fine shoes. I will go myself."

When the bride's defender opened the door again, he had with him a yellowed old crone leaning on two sticks, no other, in fact, than the wandering beggar and fortune-teller, who had heard of the wedding and hurried back for the spoils.

"I can't find a dove of any kind. I only found an apple, this wrinkled apple, lying under the tree among the leaves. Put it in your pocket and give it to your pigeon to eat, and he will sigh no more."

The tailor took off his hat and made a profound reverence to the

...does not lose its
wrinkled. But I
apple or your flow
corn. It is my little
I am going to look

"The Lord ha
What a sharp fel
on, my friend, com
little dove is not
her myself in my
cage with gold
There she is, gay
beautiful and magni
With that the brid
pistols in the air an
the vanquished defe
the door, and the ta
greet the bride.

Thumette stood th
demure and very
pretty in her wedd
wore a stiff black sk
of pink silk aroun
edged with silver la

The tailor drank the bride's health and then went out to get the groom and his followers. Alan and Thumette glanced at each other shyly out of the corners of their eyes and quickly averted them. This getting married was a pretty uncomfortable ordeal for the chief actors. All the fun was for the audience.

Father Boennec stepped forward to receive his future son-in-law, and handed him a stout leather girth.

Alan took it gravely and proceeded to fasten it around the waist of his bride. And Thumette blushed and smiled and trembled, more conscious of her lover's awkward fingers fumbling over the buckle at her waist than of the symbol of servitude that was being laid upon her.

While this was going on the shoemaker poet sang in doggerel verse on a venerable theme :

On the hillside bare
Ran a gay young mare.
Oh, do what you are doing!
Woo while you are wooing!
Do what you do,
Do what you do,
Do it well!

She thought of no harm
As she played on the farm.
Oh, do what you are doing! etc.

She browsed on the green
And drank from the stream.
Oh, do what you are doing! etc.

She was
When his
Oh, do what

She ran to
And neigh
Oh, do what

Nor did he
To stroke
Oh, do what

Then he g
That taugh
Oh, do what

And after t
And after t
Oh, do what
Woo while yo
Do what
Do what
Do it w

When this strar
mony was over, t
tary hush. A sor
ancholy spread
a brief trenchant
this

be in bondage to a man's will, to belong to him soul and body, to slave for him night and day, cook and scrub and sew and wash for him, to bear him children in anguish of the body, to toil for them, and grow feeble and old, and die and be buried, and have for sole inscription, "Here lies the faithful spouse of such an one."

Here was the appropriate time to strike another minor note. Father Boennec took off his broad felt hat and bowed his white head. All the men followed his example.

"My friends, let us repeat the prayer for the dead, that the souls of the departed may rest in peace. First of all for my father and mother, Ives Boennec and Marie Lascar, then for my brothers Ives and Per and Iann and Bleaz; also for my sisters Anna and Katel, and for all their children who fell asleep in their infancy. Let us pray for the father and mother of my wife, Ronan le Cor and Iannet Drezou, for my wife's sister Glodina, and her sister's husband, Olier Garrec"—and so on all the way through the long list of all the dead relatives of all the family—"May they rest in peace!"

*De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine ;
Domine, exaudi vocem meam.
Fiant aures tuæ intendentes*

Sustinuit anima m
Speravit anima me
A custodia matutina
Speret Israël in D
Quia apud Domini
Et copiosa apud et
Et ipse redimet Is
Ex omnibus iniquit
Requiem æternam
Et lux perpetua luc
Requiescant in pac

Domine, exaudi or
Et clamor meus ad
Requiescant in pac
A

When it was over
function of master
mounted a chair
present to come to
the feast and dance
low. Then he gave
formation of the
and the company,
boisterous again, s
two behind a in

ber of the wedding party took one and laid down a coin in its place for the parish poor.

When they came out of the church, the parish poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind, and a rabble of children as well were waiting to greet them with good wishes and scramble for the pennies that would be thrown. Pistols were again fired in the air, and bundles of straw fastened on the ends of poles were set on fire and waved recklessly about. Next came the time-honored ceremony of "stealing the bride." Everybody moved back to give her space to run in, and all the young men started in pursuit. Maurice had been acting as best man, and right gallantly had he played his part. Now he proved his claims to the position of honor by being swifter or bolder than his competitors and throwing his arm around the waist of the fleeing bride before she reached the other side of the square. Or perhaps Thumette thought it would be finer to be caught by the Son of the Château and favored him a bit? Who shall say? It was now in order for the bride to lead her captor to the nearest tavern and treat him to a mug of cider; but Maurice preferred to take his forfeit in a kiss, and Alan was obliged, somewhat ungraciously, to give him leave.

send over and im
on Thumette's fl
a strangely unplea
through her from l
it possible? Coul
She, Delphine, jeal
girl? The idea w
surd. And Delph
fully at herself f
thought even a mo

Another spectato
instant from the d
had walked all day
nec. She did not r
ings, she simply fel
no doubt about the
sensations either.
she hated her sister
as she hated the Pa
forted herself, thou
wave of triumph.
days," she thought
twenty more days!"
rested on Maurice wi
of confident pronriet

regardless of the streams of perspiration that covered his shining face. When they reached the Boennec cottage, the wedding feast was waiting for them, spread on tables out of doors under deftly constructed arbors. Obviously there would not have been room in the house for such a company. Each guest brought his own knife, fork, and spoon. It was a feast of Homeric solidity, more generous than dainty, but evidently well suited to the feasters. There were soup and tripe and stewed veal and boiled beef, butter and brandy, *crêpes* and honey. Between the courses songs were sung, stories told, and jokes cracked. When it was over at last the musicians struck up, and the dance began in good earnest and lasted till far into the night.

The festival ended with the most singular and barbaric rite of all. When the clock struck twelve the guests gathered in the house and laid the newly married couple in the *lit-clos* reserved for them and placed four sleepy little children in the four corners as symbols of innocence. Then there was a solemn silence in which a falling pin would have been heard, and Father Boennec raised his voice and led them all in chanting,

Accend
Infunde
Infirma
Virtute

In sæcu

The transiti
religion to the
buffoonery was
last notes of th
the air, when s
the nuptial bed
milk and two
holes, and the l
perforce sit up
.*laid* with these sc
a running fire
the half or who
ers. When the
victims enough,
home and the m
ily retired to t
in their respecti
various parts of



XVII.

IN an angle of the oldest part of the château, facing on the courtyard, is a very curious tower, heavy, massive, and with no trace of ornament or frivolity. To the height of the château roof it is hexagonal in form ; from there up it is circular. Narrow slits for windows are scattered over its surface with the utter disregard of symmetry and the perfect harmony in general effect that characterize the architecture of the Middle Ages. The peasants call it *Tour-er-H'roech*, the Tower of the Fairy, and tradition says it was once tenanted by Tiphaine de Raguene! the wife of the Constable du Guesclin, whose skill in astrology has made the peasants of Brittany speak her name in a whisper ever since.

“You have never been up in the tower? Come now, *ma cousine*. The moon is almost full. It will be beautiful.”

shouldn't we go :
afraid of me, Delph

Delphine laugh

"Oh, no, you'r
my cousin"—with
posure that Mat
pique. I don't k
be so, but it is ve
young man to be to
less.

M. de Quellan w
ers with the parish
thest corner of the
was out attending
matters, so no one
they left the room.
and easy translat
started up the tower.
staircase coiled roun
round a central colu
the whole of the
slowly climbed the e
air grew colder and
world they had left
farther away. At 12

was a sea of dark treetops and the bell tower of the village church rising out of the valley. Here and there a light twinkled in a farmhouse. The world was very, very still, with the breathing stillness of sleep, so different from the stillness of death. Unconsciously their voices dropped almost to a whisper, lest they should jar on the harmonious silence of the night.

"Just the time for the Lady Tiphaine to be studying the stars ! See how clear the sky is."

"I wish I were the Lady Tiphaine !"

"You, Delphine ? Why then you'd be dead. You're a great deal nicer alive."

"Yes, I don't want to be dead. I didn't mean that. No, I shouldn't like that at all. But I'd like to be an enchantress."

"You are."

"Oh, don't be stupid. I don't mean that sort of thing. I mean a real one like Tiphaine, and be able to work spells and do just what I liked with people."

"You can."

"Oh, no, I can't, not one bit ! Think how glorious the sense of power would be ! Power is the best thing in the world anyhow. I would do anything to possess it."

thing like that. I
it any day—if I ha

"If I believed
you say, it would
happy; but I know

"Oh, yes, I do
Prince of Darkness

"Heaven forbid

"Maurice, you
most ridiculous be
ever shone on!"

"Very likely."

There was a sile
Maurice felt hurt.

"Don't be cross
mured Delphine in
She happened to be
and wanted the soci
smoothly. "Perha
wicked after all. Yes
I will send away His
when he calls—as I c
like him!"

"I knew you woul

world up here," she mused presently. "Doesn't it seem far away—that old workaday world down below?"

"Let it stay far away forever and ever!" he exclaimed. "I ask nothing better than a world that shall hold—just you and me—no more—like this one."

"This world does not belong to us, Maurice—this world up here. We are only interlopers. It belongs to the Past. It belongs to the ghosts who dwell here—Tiphaine and the rest. I can see them, feel them, everywhere — ladies and pages, knights in their armor, monks in their cowls, whole companies of them!"

"Yes," he answered, falling into her mood, "and think how often the Lady Tiphaine sat in that very place where you are now, Delphine, to study the stars!"

"I wonder if she really knew anything about them?" said Delphine irreverently, with one of her lightening changes of mood.

"They say she could read them like a book. Whenever Du Guesclin was away fighting the English or the Spaniards or anybody, she would find out the lucky and the unlucky days for him way ahead and send him a list of them, and he would plan his marches and battles to suit

member my n
Delphine. “
lots of times :

“ Yes, but t
reckless and c
to Tiphaine’s

“ And the
ought to giv
wives’ advice.

“ When I a
everything my

“ I believe
I always thou
for a hen-peck

“ At your se

They both
and both dec
joking and the
very close to
silence for som
was looking
Maurice was lo

“ I wonder
too ?” she said,

“ One might

bound and streaming down her back."

"Oh, if that's all!" laughed Delphine, and her ready fingers began pulling out the hair-pins.

Maurice's heart was in his mouth. His conflicting feelings almost choked him. He was ashamed of himself. He felt like a traitor.—But the temptation was so great. To Delphine it was nothing. She did not know that in Brittany a woman's hair is her most sacred treasure, jealously guarded from eye of man. It was a silly feeling, he knew, but it was in the blood; he could not help it. Should he be loyal and tell her? Was he committing a sacrilege? How justly angry she would be if she knew! But there was no harm really. It meant nothing to her—and—*Dame!* It was too late now! The mischief was done. The last hair-pin was out, Delphine threw back her head, and the great coils of hair shook themselves free and fell over her shoulders and down her back, enveloping her like a cloud. How beautiful it was in those great waving masses! He lifted it in his two hands. It was soft as silk. He buried his face in it. It felt cool to his burning cheeks. A faint, indescribable, elusory perfume radiated from it. His head reeled, his heart

.

suppressed ten

"You are the

Will you let me

"*You*, Du (

scornfully. "V

a brave knigh

wonderful thing

boy. What hav

Guesclin?"

"Nothing," I

enough, folding

from touching h

"Will what?"

fight Saracens?

"I would do

with all my heart

that there are r

What shall I do?

"There are p

ing a man. Bri

medal, for insta

about Du Guescl

"I will do it"

said the boy earne

while?"



XVIII.



H, *Jesu-Marie*, the Yellow Dwarf has come for Father Boennec ! ”

“ May the Lord have mercy on his soul ! ”

“ Where is madame? She might have some charm that would help him. ”

“ Has anyone gone for *M. le recteur* ? ”

“ They say the bones of his neck stick straight up, and his leg is so bewitched that he can’t move it without groaning. ”

“ *Trumm, trumm !* ”

“ *It atao !* ”

“ *Dalc’hid mad, paotred !* We are in the hands of God. ”

This was a little of the confused babel that rose from the courtyard to Delphine’s window the next morning.

“ Augustine, for Heaven’s sake stop brushing that dress and find out what all this hub-bub means ! ”

Augustine was only too glad to do

her small *ne*
retroussé than

"Were the
peasants, mad
believe it pos
old man Boer
horse he was
smith's and br
and the good
run into by c
stalk up and
or other and t

"And what

"Doctor ?

such a thing.
sent for one, a
case for the p
doctor, and tha
be accomplishe

"That's *one*

I suppose," said
herself in the g
placency and
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tleman. "They will not hear of it. They have no confidence in doctors."

"But you aren't going to let the poor man die because they are so stupid?"

"One must respect their prejudices. We have no longer any authority over our people. The little influence that is left us would be lost the moment we antagonized their pet beliefs."

"But, *mon cousin*, this man will die, and there is no need for it!"

"Eh, my dear, my wife has gone down to the cottage with the bandages and liniments, and our good priest is there too. If it is only a case of a broken limb, they can set it between them. If the old man dies, it will be of fright or old age. No doctor could help that."

"If I lived here, I would change all that," she burst out indignantly.

"Would you, little girl?" And the old man laid his hand on her head with a kindly smile. "I doubt it. The world is not very easy to remodel. Others have tried it before now."

She smiled too—at her own enthusiasm perhaps—and changed the subject.

"What is it they think is the matter with him, *mon cousin*? August-

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"Most likely. Though we should beware of believing things merely because they might very well be true. That is a canon of criticism too often neglected."

"It's very interesting," said Delphine, "and, as you say, it's very curious. But, meanwhile, the poor man is dying 'that the words of the prophet might be fulfilled,' and that seems very dreadful."

"Yes, I suppose it does—to you especially. But Father Boennec is an old man, and he has already lived more than the allotted threescore years and ten. Dying is not the worst thing in the world after all."

"Oh, what a terribly pessimistic remark!"

He smiled and went back to his subject.

"But the real truth of it is—I have tried so many times to reason with these people, and failed, that I have given it up."

"It needs fresh energies and fresh enthusiasm, I suppose," she reflected.

"Yes. Perhaps I was wrong. Perhaps *you* could do it after all. You have plenty of both. If you could only bring yourself to make your home with us here," he suggested tentatively, "there is no

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with difficulty and begged pitifully for air.

"More air—take me to the door," he gasped. "Lift me up—lift me up."

Then he grew too weak for speech, and there was no sign of life but the nervous twitching of his fingers and his labored breathing. His toothless mouth grew round and opened and shut at each gasp with a hideous likeness to a fish taken off the hook and thrown in the bottom of the boat, to slowly strangle to death.

"It is all over," said the priest, who stood beside him. "Let us pray for the repose of his soul!"





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"Oh, not at all, papa; I have managed to amuse myself very well."

"At your cousin's expense? 'Great fun for the boys, but how about the frogs?' as our friends the God-dems say. Really, Delphine, you are almost as heartless a 'flirt' as those 'shocking' American girls! I don't know what I have ever done to have such a daughter."

"I know how you must feel about it. You have always been so good [*si sage*] yourself, papa."

He turned angrily toward her and flushed deeply.

"Innuendoes of that kind from a young girl to her father are scarcely in good taste, my daughter."

She looked at him steadily for a moment with a biting reply on her lips, then her expression changed, and she burst out with a soft contagious laugh.

"*Ah, mon cher petit papa,*" she whispered caressingly, "let us be sensible! I am not a judge in Israel!"

"Little witch, thou canst twist even thy old father around thy slender fingers!" And he brushed his mustache across her cheek.

Delphine made a small grimace and polished off her cheek with her handkerchief, but her father was not

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you will forget *me*. People don't waste much time thinking about those who are out of sight. It is the decree of a beneficent Providence."

"I shall never forget you!" he protested in all seriousness.

"Ah, I have heard such things before, *mon cousin*," she laughed. "I know how much they mean."

"Why will you never take me seriously?"

"Because I am still in possession of my faculties."

He started to leave the room, but, before he had reached the door, turned and came back to her.

"And when I have won the medal, I may come to you?"

"If you like. When the sun rises in the west, it may set in the east."

"I will show you!" he exclaimed with a sudden flash of anger in his eyes, and this time he left the room in good earnest.


Next morning the stage carried her away.

"*Au revoir!*"

"*Bon voyage!*"

"*Au plaisir de vous revoir!*"

The wheels rattled, the curtains flapped, the driver's whip cracked, a cloud of white dust covered the departure of the lumbering old *voiture-couverte*, and Delphine's summer in the wilderness was at an end.


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perfection. How exquisite his dress was—not a flaw! How admirable his manner: the ideal mean between modesty and self-assertion; great confidence in himself combined with absolute deference to her. Delphine, with all her critical faculties, could find nothing to carp at. He stayed just long enough to show how much he enjoyed lingering and at the same time make himself regretted when he left. As he told her or hinted to her, in his incomparable way, with gay raillery and good-natured cynicism, the latest bits of society gossip—well worded for the tender ears of a young girl and yet suggestive of much because Delphine was clever—and gave a running criticism of the new play at the Odéon and the new picture So-and-so had painted and shown to a select few at his studio, and the last novel out and the wonderful equipage that a certain Russian prince was driving in the Bois, and the new American mixed drink that was going the rounds of the clubs, and the last *mot* gotten off by that clever fellow on the staff of the *Figaro*, Delphine wondered how it was she had lived away from these things so long. Yes, surely, she was with her own again. This was where she belonged.

She thought wonderingly of her

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other day I met *le petit* de Vère and he said to me, 'What is the matter with you, my boy? You are as pale as a ghost and as glum as a circus clown.' Fortunately the sun was passing under a cloud at that moment, and pointing upward, I said, 'It is because of the eclipse. When you see me once more in the sunlight I shall be all right.' But the eclipse was a very long one, mademoiselle, two whole months long!"

With that he rose to go.

"He is very nice," said the elderly aunt when he had left, "quite unexceptionable. You are a very lucky girl, Delphine."

The young woman opened her eyes with wide indignation.

"You mean *he* would be a very lucky man if ever I should happen to—— Oh, but I shan't! I think I will never marry anyhow, *ma tante*. I'll take a season or so in the world, go to a lot of balls and operas, learn all I can about life, and then retire to a convent, take the veil, and devote the poor remainder of my days to holiness!"

"Yes, I've heard girls talk like that before," replied the old lady from the calm heights of her experience.



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married, and devoting an hour or so to an elaborate toilet. No bride ever decked herself with more care. No detail was omitted. She changed the ribbon that decorated the gown and put on in its place some she had worn to mass one day when He had said how fine she looked. She combed her long brown hair and plastered it scrupulously away under her finest *coiffe*, that no stray lock of it should show. She spent some time struggling with her hands and finger nails in the vain effort to make them look like the hateful Parisian woman's, but this had to be abandoned—and anyhow it did not matter, for he could not help himself. It was preordained.

While she was putting the last touches to her dress, she glanced out of the window and saw Maurice and Gaston with gun and game-bag walking uphill across the fields. It was doubtless a sign, she said to herself, and though he would have to come to her wherever she was, she could not resist the impulse to follow him. It could at least do no harm.

At first she tried to keep them from seeing her, but when they came out on the open plateau on top of the mountain, concealment became impossible—and indeed, why should

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"What are you
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a great many strange things of late. I don't understand you any more."

"All in good time," she replied.

"What are you doing up here anyhow?"

"Waiting."

"What for?"

"For you."

"And what do you want with me?"

"Ask your own heart."

She was so stupidly sure of the old crone's prophecy that she was reckless as to what she did or said, or her woman's instinct would have shown her the utter fatuity of her course.

"Look here, Berc'hed Boennec, I think you must be crazy," Maurice said sternly. "Have I ever made love to you?"

"No, not yet."

"No, and I never shall! Have I ever been fond of you in any way except as I was fond of your father and mother and brothers and sisters and all the village people? Have I ever led you to think I cared for you any other way?"

"No, but you will."

"Well I swear most solemnly I won't!"

The tears gushed to the girl's eyes; she brushed them away, but

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"You love that girl from Paris!" she exclaimed fiercely.

"What if I do? What is that to you? And don't dare mention my cousin's name again. You're not fit to speak it."

"Oh, Jesu-Marie, what have I done? What have I done?" moaned the girl. "Good-by!" she said suddenly and turned to leave them.

Instead of going back the way she came, she kept on across the plateau, walking very fast and looking neither to the right nor to the left. Gaston, with a boy's shamefacedness in such matters, could not bring himself to say a word about this strange scene that was stirring his curiosity to its depths, and Maurice was in no mood to discuss it, so they walked on in silence. Gaston, however, kept looking over his shoulder to see where Berc'hed was.

"It isn't safe where she's walking," he said at last. "Look, Maurice, she's right on the edge of the precipice. You know how that bank overhangs and how it is always crumbling."

"I guess she's old enough to take care of herself," he replied shortly. They walked on a few moments more, then Gaston suddenly turned on his heel and started in the direction of the peasant girl.

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as she fell, and Gaston, fearing she might not be able to keep her hold, had clambered down to her, hand over hand, and had helped her into a securer position.

"Don't try to come down," he called up to Maurice. "We're all right here, but it mightn't hold you too. Besides you could do no good. Get us a rope and pull us up."

"It is too far to a house. This will do better," returned Maurice, and he started to tear his coat into strips. At the sound of his voice Berc'hed made a sudden movement to look up. Gaston, fearing she would lose her balance, rashly let go his hold on the tree and threw both arms around her. But the girl began to writhe like some wild thing.

"*You* are the Son of the Château too! God help me! This is what she meant."

"Let go of her! She is crazy! She will pull you over!" called Maurice, but the brave little fellow would not do it.

Maurice swung himself over the edge and started down to his brother's assistance, but it was too late. There was a momentary cracking, then a sudden sharp snap. The tree had given way, and fell with its human freight into the valley below.

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XXII.

ELPHINE lay in her dressing gown among a multitude of pillows on the couch in her dainty blue and silver boudoir. It was almost time to dress for dinner, and after dinner they were to go to the opera, and she was enjoying these last few moments of laziness. She had just come out of her bath and was reveling in a delicious sense of languor and well-being.

She was thinking, in a desultory fashion, of M. Saintaine. He had formally asked her father for her hand the day before, and her father had said he wished his daughter to suit herself, it was an idiosyncrasy of his—but if M. Saintaine could win her, he could have her. Thus much her father had told her. He had added that M. Saintaine was an excellent *parti* and that it was about time she was established, and that she could not please her father better than by accepting him. And she

clever things too, which disposed her in his favor rather good-looking as well as eminently correct in dress and manner. He was distinctly *d'esprit*, and everyone was sure to make his mark. He wore the red button of the Legion of Honor. He was not especially distinguished, but then men are not. And his ideals were not far from the mark except his ideals as to what a man should be. As a rule, the more a man is himself, the more he is for his wife. It was not what he had dreamed of—but that is never is. He was very much in love with her, and she liked him very much. He missed him when he was away, and was conscious of a responsive beating of her heart in his presence. She rather than he was capable of something like this in the line of affection. It is not very good form

tages in being a married woman, especially in France. A girl is sadly handicapped. The young married women have all the fun—— Yes, doubtless she would end by accepting M. Saintaine.

Augustine came in just then with a note for Delphine. It was from her father, written at his club, merely a hurried pencil scrawl.

“I have just received a telegram from M. de Quellan, announcing that his son was killed yesterday while trying to save some peasant girl who was falling over a precipice. Under the circumstances it will hardly do for us to go to the opera this evening as we had planned, and I have written M. Saintaine to that effect. As I am not to have the pleasure of escorting you to-night, I won't attempt to come home to dinner.”

“Put away that dress, Augustine,” she said in a tone of deep disgust. “My aunt and I shall dine alone to-night.”

“But mademoiselle is going to the opera?”

“No, I am not.”

“I do think papa might have kept that till morning,” she reflected petulantly. “I feel just in the mood for the opera. How stupid people are!—And what did Maurice want to get killed for, anyhow, I wonder?”

XXIII.



ELPHINE was very soon
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himself out, and she saw
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And then she awoke, shivering from head to foot.

All of a sudden and for the first time the whole awfulness of it came over her. Maurice, that perfect picture of health and strength and buoyant young life, was lying cold and dead, battered and disfigured by the jagged rocks perhaps. It was cruel, it was atrocious. He had lost his life in trying to save the life of another, one of those stolid, stupid, beefish girls who surely got no satisfaction out of living. All the more noble of him ! The brave, generous boy ! And she had laughed at him—— It was too late now to atone. He would never know how with her whole perverse young heart she *adored* him. She had been so sure of his love that she had played with it and tossed it away and laughed at it. Yes, actually dared to—frivolous, heartless spoiled child that she was ! And he had not reproached her. He had bowed his head and said, " You are right. I have done nothing to deserve you. But I will." And then he had gone forth, her hero, and been killed, and it was she who had sent him to his death, she, Delphine, had done it !

She lay on the bed and buried her face in the pillows and sobbed till her head ached and her eyes felt

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"Bah!" she said to herself, "all the English and Americans do it. It cannot be very dangerous."

She felt a thrill of excitement at her own temerity, none the less. At first she walked very briskly, then more slowly, while she thought. She did not know where she was going nor where she was. The streets she was passing through seemed perfectly unfamiliar. However, that was all one to her. She certainly did not want to meet people she knew. She only wanted to get tired—tired enough to forget Maurice, tired enough to go to sleep and get rid of his haunting eyes.

There must have been something hopelessly Parisian about her dress and bearing, though, for the men all stared at her, and she felt a strange sense of degradation when their bold, impertinent eyes rested on her. The utter vulgarity of the world sickened her. A dogcart passed her with two smartly dressed youths on the front seat. They both stared, and the one nearest her snatched the reins from his companion and drew up the horses on their haunches.

"*Ohé, la blonde!*" he cried.

Probably he was somewhat intoxicated, for his companion tried to

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and passed out on the street and began walking again.

It did not occur to her to wonder where she was until she became aware that she was very, very tired, and that she wanted to rest. Then she looked up and saw she was under the shadow of Notre Dame. The green doors swung in and out. She pushed one open and went in.

The church was very cool and dark and quiet. It was restful to eyes and brain alike. It was almost deserted. Half a dozen good people knelt here and there in front of an altar and said their prayers. One by one they went out and left her alone in the great cathedral.

In one of the chapels a funeral service had just been held. The black hangings were still up, and the black floor-cloth covered the steps. She sank down on the lowest step among the pile of black stuffs, and leaned her head against the railing. She seemed very much a part of it all. Her heart ached and ached and would not be comforted. And yet, in spite of herself, she felt soothed by the beauty and majesty of the place. The columns of the nave and choir lifted themselves up and burst into the triumphant curves of the vaulting like a forest of palm trees—subtle, exquisite curves that distill a

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arms and cried a little while for very loneliness, then, without moving, she stopped crying and fell to thinking. And the thought hurt worse than the tears.

"Are you in trouble? Can I help you?"

The voice was right over her. She had not heard anyone coming. She started with a little cry of surprise and looked up at him.

Was she dreaming? Was her mind unsettled? Merciful God—what was it? A young man stood beside her dressed in black. His left arm was bandaged and in a sling. There was a scar across his cheek and his face was pale as death, but it was *he*—it was Maurice!

"Delphine!" he cried. "You here? All alone?"

He sank down on his knees on the step beside her, for she was trembling so that he thought she would faint.

"I thought you were dead," she faltered, as though that explained it all. And she looked up at him timidly, beseechingly. Was this Delphine?

"*Darling!*" he whispered and gathered her close to his breast with his one strong arm, while his lips sought hers with the passionate thirst of a man who has walked through the great desert.

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bad lands, he and I. Berc'hed Boennec—you remember her?—followed us up there. She said—something that was very strange, that made me very angry, and I answered her sharply. Then she left us. Presently Gaston saw that she was walking too near the edge of the precipice and started to warn her. I was angry and kept on. A minute later I heard her scream and turned in time to see her go over the edge. No, I don't know whether she meant to or not. But she did not fall to the bottom. She caught in the branches of a little tree, and Gaston, without a thought for himself, climbed down the face of the rock to help her. That was before I could get there. I started to tear up my coat to make a rope for them to be pulled up by. But Berc'hed must have been crazy. She began struggling and fighting like a madwoman. I tried to make Gaston let go of her, but he wouldn't. Then I started to climb down to them. Then the tree broke—and they fell—and I climbed down a little way more and I fell too."

He paused, the horror of it still in his eyes. Delphine nestled close against him.

"That's all," he said presently. "The next I knew I was at the foot

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EPILOGUE.

IT was an afternoon in early spring. A subtle sense of newborn life breathed in the air, stirred the pulses, and permeated to the very heart. Even on the arid mountain-top plateau where nothing grew but rank red grass and piles of jagged rock shut out the caressing sky, even here one felt, rather than saw, the suave touch of the Nature-Goddess, which was dead and is alive again.

Outlined against the sky, on the very edge of the cliff, rose a rough-hewn granite cross. There was no inscription on it, but it bore the coat of arms of Kerviny. The earth had the look of having been thrown up around it at no very distant date. One might think the cross would be lonely up there, but it was not, for it had many visitors.

First a little brown rabbit came running through the grass, sat down in front of the unfamiliar stone,

He had followed it clear to
mountain-top. He paused
saw the cross, lifted his hat
head and made the holy sign,
he hurried on after his sheep.

The next to pass was a
broad beaver hat and a
soutane. He was on his way
sick-bed. He stopped, then
front of the cross long enough
peat a Pater and an Ave and
Profundis. After him came
an old woman with a baby in her
arm. She must have been young, but
there was no trace of freshness or juv
ness in her face. A year's contact
with the brutal realities of life
made a premature old woman
of her, faded and careworn. But
there was a beautiful new light of hope
in her eyes, and if her life had been
a hard one, she did not know it.
She was only what she was.

have been married and had a little one like thee, my precious, and be alive and happy to this day. Eh, well, God rest her soul! And M. Gaston's too!" And she gathered up the child to her breast and went her way.

The next visitors to the cross were a couple already bowed by age and grief, not peasants this time, but gently bred and nurtured. They had climbed the steep path slowly and with difficulty. The lady clung to her husband's arm. He still walked erect and his threadbare frock coat was buttoned tightly to his chin, but his hair had grown very white. The lady laid a handful of choice hothouse roses at the foot of the cross and her lips trembled for a moment, but tears do not readily come to the aged. Then they turned and went back the way they came. After this there was a pause. The sun had set, but the sky was still flushed with opalescent clouds. A threadlike new moon was drifting slowly after the sun.

Over the brow of the hill appeared a man and a woman. They were young and well-favored, and they walked as though they had drunk of the Fountain of Life. And in truth they had, for they were newly wedded, and the mere rapture of be-

because they were afraid of
great happiness. They
here to strike this man
had for them a sweet tea
with nothing of bitter.
They sat down on the
foot of the cross. The man
his supple form its full
pillowed his head on his
She buried her hand in his
and pushed it back tenderly
forehead. They talked
suited to the place and
almost in whispers, talked
selves and their happiness,
little Gaston and his brave

"And when will it please
to go back to Paris to select
for the winter?" he said.

"We are never going
Paris to live," she answered.

"We are going to live at I

"You? At Kerviny?
would be bored to death.
I couldn't think of it."
